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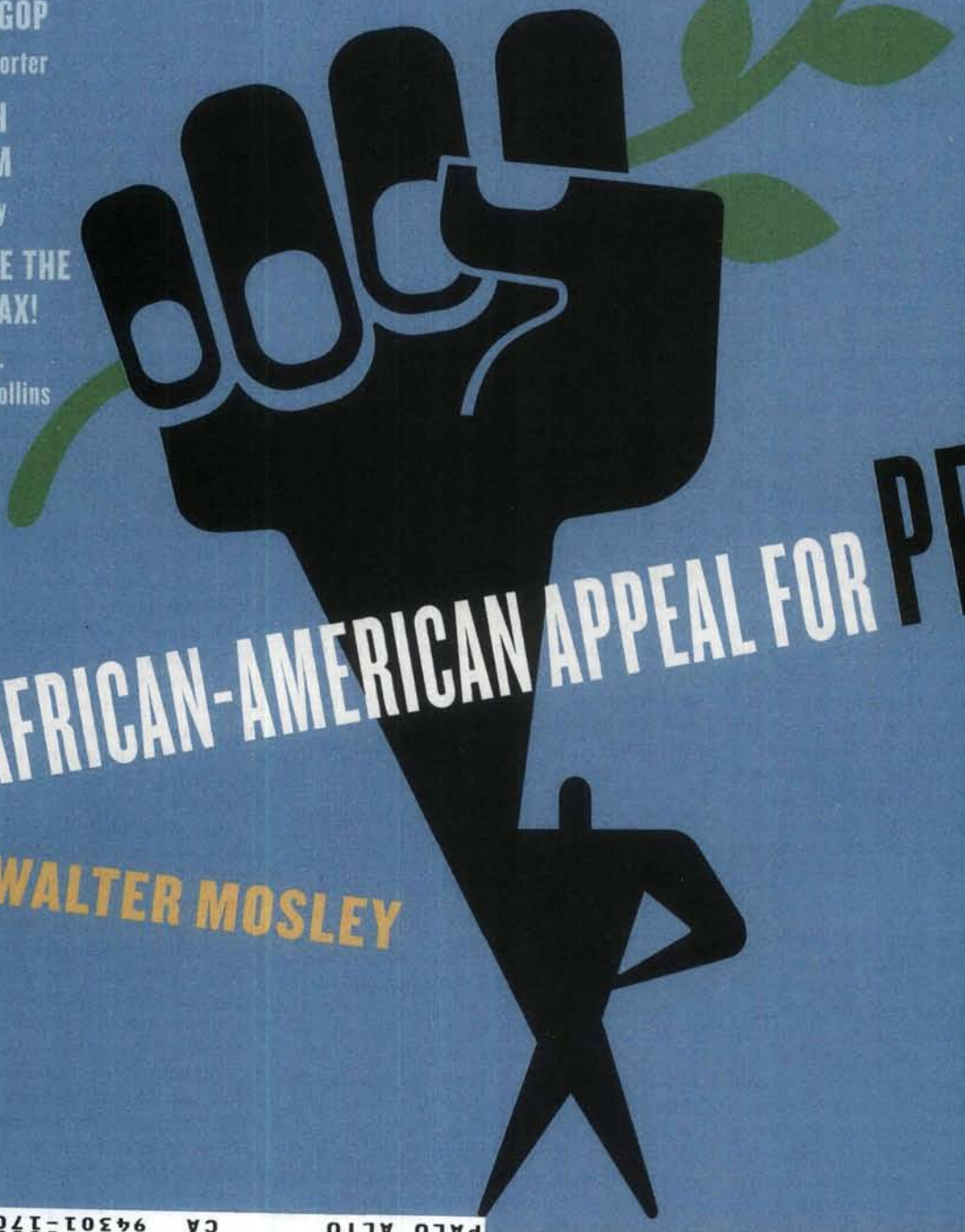

AN AFRICAN-AMERICAN APPEAL FOR PEACE

by WALTER MOSLEY

ALSO: CONFRONTATION IN KOREA
by TIM SHORROCK

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LETTERS

Letters

CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

WANT FRIES WITH THAT?

New Hope, Pa.

■ How deliciously amusing that Trent Lott was forced to eat not only crow but Jim Crow ["A Sorry Lott," Jan. 13/20]. MICHAEL HOLCOMB

MUTANT CORN THREATENS...

Amherst, Mass.

■ In "Sowing Disaster?" [Oct. 28], Mark Schapiro mentions a number of the risks posed by genetically engineered corn, including its surreptitious spread into the world's center of corn genetic diversity in southern Mexico and Guatemala. As Schapiro reports, crop genetic diversity is the world's "insurance policy," protecting our long-term food security by sustaining the bases for adaptation to new plant diseases, insect pests and climate change.

But Schapiro does not mention the possibly greater threat to crop diversity: the global integration of agricultural markets. Traditional Mexican corn farmers, for example, today face increasing competition from cheap US corn imports (genetically modified or not) as a result of NAFTA and the Mexican government's embrace of the neoliberal creed that market prices are the only measure of value.

If *campesinos* are forced to abandon their cornfields in search of better livelihoods, it will trigger "genetic erosion"—widespread losses of diversity—in North America's number-one crop. These small farmers, and others like them around the world who cultivate diversity in rice, wheat and other crops, provide an immensely valuable service to humankind. There is an urgent need to develop strategies to reward these farmers for the fruits of their labor—fruits that ultimately feed us all. JAMES K. BOYCE

St. Louis

■ Mark Schapiro highlights the problem of genes engineered into a target species escaping into other cultivars of the same, or related, species. The potential escape of genes from corn engineered for production of pharmaceuticals into the commercial corn population is the most serious scenario he describes. There are plausible technologies aimed at limiting fertilization by transgenic pollen only to transgenic plants of the same cultivar, so that when transgenic pollen lands on plants in neighboring fields, development would be aborted. These strategies are *not* "terminator technology." The transgenic seeds are fully viable and can be planted on the same terms as other seed (for more information see an article by H. Daniell in *Nature Biotechnology*). We should demand intensive research and the adoption of technologies that limit transgene spread—especially when that spread might have serious consequences, as in the case of plants producing pharmaceuticals.

Schapiro also expresses concern for the genetic pollution of isolated, ancient cultivars (land races). A controversial paper in a 2001 issue of *Nature* reported finding DNA sequences unique to transgenic corn in land races. Land races are vital since breeders rely on them when new traits are needed for contemporary commercial breeding. The authors of the *Nature* paper note that transgenic markers found only in GE corn provide "a unique opportunity to trace the flow of genetic material over biogeographical regions." If DNA from relatively recently modified corn has moved to such an area, it seems highly probable that DNA from corn improved by standard breeding techniques would also have been incorporated into land races during the many years that land races and commercial varieties have shared the hemisphere. This probability underscores another policy priority—the urgency of collecting and preserving the genetic diversity still remaining in ancient cultivars. DANNY KOHL

Nantucket, Mass.

■ Mark Schapiro relies on a paper appearing in the British science journal *Nature*, on the purported escape of GM corn genes into the Mexican environment. However, the editors of *Nature* reported with chagrin on October 24, 2002, that this paper has some very serious problems and concluded that "the evidence available is not sufficient to justify the publication of the original paper." RUSSELL SEITZ

Evanston, Ill.

■ GMOs are problematic because of the lack of transparency and traceability in our food system. People want to know if they're eating GMOs, yet most have no real way of telling. I am a student at Northwestern University and am working to get the school to use organic food, support local growers and phase out GM products. The dining-services coordinator told me it is essentially impossible to phase out or even label GMOs in our dining halls, because the food suppliers don't know who grew it or if their products are GMOs. As the supply chain gets increasingly muddled and our food sources get farther away, there are fewer places to turn. If you are lucky enough to have a farmers' market, community-supported agriculture or other local supplier in your area, you're off to a good start, but even corporate organic food stores do nothing to let us see where our food comes from. Hope lies in places like the University of Iowa, where most of their banquet food comes from local farmers, or Toronto, where city-catered functions support local growers. I don't want my food coming from Monsanto, but how am I to know? PHILLIP CAMPANILE

SCHAPIRO REPLIES

New York City

■ I appreciate the interest my article has generated—coming at a time when a growing percentage of our nation's food is dependent on genetically engineered technology.

I agree with James Boyce that the issues raised by genetic engineering must be seen in the context of changes in the structure of global agriculture. I will never forget traveling through southern Mexico, where town after town had been emptied of its farmers—who had been driven off their land and out of business by competition from cheap US imports. While in the name of "free trade" America pressures Mexico and other foreign nations to eliminate tariffs and subsidies to protect its own producers, Mexican farmers now find themselves unable to compete with subsidized US farm exports. The ironies are poignant. Many of those former Mexican farmers head north and end up working as farmhands in the cornfields of the Midwest.

Consider an equally poignant image on the other side of the Rio Grande: the dozens of farm auctions across America's rural heartland each month. Trying with increasingly little success to sustain family farms against the twin forces of corporate competition and declining commodity prices, many US farmers are forced to auction off their farm implements and their land. Mexican and American farmers are on the same highwire, attempting to sustain an evermore-tenuous living in an era of corporate agriculture.

Danny Kohl makes the correct assertion that some new corn is being engineered to remain sterile in the face of floating pollen. But why is corn being used at all for this next frontier of genetic research, in which medicines are being bred into the genetic fiber of the plant itself? Putting aside whether one agrees with developing biopharmaceuticals in plants, there is growing concern among leading botanists that corn is the wrong choice of crop. Corn is by far the most promiscuous of food crops, sending its pollen into the wind and making it extremely difficult to insulate the new antibodies and vaccines being bred into those plants from pollinating neighboring fields, where corn is grown to be eaten by livestock or people. We have already seen one particularly egregious result of such contamination: The EPA levied a $250,000 fine on the firm leading the research on biopharmaceuticals in corn, ProdiGene, for allowing the vaccine-laden corn into a feed corn and soybean field.

The article to which Russell Seitz refers was

(Continued on Page 23)

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EDITORIALS

Axis of Incoherence

The burgeoning Far East crisis has exposed the bankruptcy of US Korea policy. Kim Jong Il's resort to nuclear threats, however deplorable, was predictable—even rational, given the hostility and bluster the Bush Administration has directed at him.

Consider: The Pentagon's $60 billion–plus Alaska-based anti-missile defense system was sold in part on the premise that North Korea was an enemy likely to launch a missile attack. Bush added North Korea to the "axis of evil" in his 2002 State of the Union address in what was more a rhetorical flourish than a considered policy judgment. In the Administration's Nuclear Posture Review, North Korea made the short list of nations that would be subject to a pre-emptive nuclear strike—a radical departure from past nuclear doctrine. Pyongyang was also stiffed out of two nuclear reactors for domestic energy needs promised in 1994 under the Clinton Administration's Agreed Framework, and the Bush team trashed South Korean President Kim Dae Jung's policy of reconciliation of the two Koreas. And then, as Tim Shorrock reports on page 18, the Administration broke off talks after Pyongyang confessed to a nuclear enrichment program, even though North Korea reportedly offered to halt the program in exchange for a written agreement that the United States would not launch a pre-emptive attack on it. Now, Washington says it's willing to talk—but only to discuss how North Korea plans to end its nuclear buildup.

The incoherence—or duplicity—of US policy stands revealed as Bush now reassures the world that the North Korean situation should be resolved by diplomacy, while insisting that war may be necessary to disarm Iraq, rich in oil the US covets but at best a second-rate military power that has submitted to International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors. Meanwhile, South Koreans are furious that Washington's actions could expose them to North Korean retaliatory missiles, and could result in a flood of refugees.

We are left with the ambivalent hope that the Administration is so eager not to be sidetracked from its war plans against Iraq that it will allow other nations in East Asia to extricate it from the dangerous impasse. It has indicated it will support the IAEA's attempt to deal with Pyongyang's nuclear program and should continue to work closely with South Korea and Japan, which are actively mediating between the two sides. If such efforts—and American tough talk—fail, according to the *Wall Street Journal*, "US officials say they are prepared to simply manage the Korean crisis for now, even if it means Pyongyang ends up resuming nuclear weapons production and building its weapons stockpile."

The Korea crisis has also laid bare the dangerous flaws of the Bush Administration's nuclear policy. Its antiproliferation strategy, for example, consists of a pledge to wage war on any nation threatening US nuclear supremacy. Instead, stronger nonproliferation agreements are needed, along with international aid and diplomatic efforts to reduce the number of countries, like North Korea and Iraq, that are a threat to their neighbors and potential suppliers of terrorist organizations. Also essential is a greater willingness to work with regional powers and the UN, which could help resolve conflicts in a nonmilitary way. The Korea crisis reveals that the Bush Administration's policies have gone beyond endangering the Mideast to endangering the entire world.

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COMMENT

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Memo to the Democrats

If Congressional Democrats want to be more than George W. Bush's punching bag in 2003—and in the critical election year of 2004—they must learn the difference between ambition and opposition. In 2002 Senate Democratic leader Tom Daschle and former House Democratic leader Dick Gephardt opted for ambition, mispositioning themselves for presidential runs by steering clear of fights with the Bush Administration on Iraq, civil liberties and the economy. By sacrificing opportunities to undermine and perhaps even upset the GOP momentum, they rendered Democrats irrelevant, and voters responded accordingly.

Daschle got the hint and folded his presidential bid, but with Gephardt and at least a half-dozen other Senate Democrats exploring 2004 presidential candidacies, 2003 will feature plenty of Capitol Hill showboating. But the proper calculation for a presidential campaign is not necessarily the proper calculation for effective legislative opposition. Indeed, if Democrats want to position their party for electoral success in the future, they'll have to recognize that their party's future will be decided by how aggressively they oppose a popular yet vulnerable President. To get it right, Democrats have to approach the 108th Congress a lot more strategically than they did the dismal 107th. To wit, they must:

§ *Get back to economic basics.* Since Bush became President, 1.8 million manufacturing jobs have been lost, unemployment has soared and confidence in the economy has plummeted. New House minority leader Nancy Pelosi proved her worth by filleting the Administration for allowing 800,000 families to lose unemployment benefits during the holiday season. Bush aides were so rattled they included a tepid extension of benefits in the President's "jobs and growth" plan. Democrats should hold out for better benefits and mount a fierce fight against the plan's call for eliminating taxes on dividends and speeding up income-tax cuts for the rich. Some Democrats will shudder when the President accuses the party of engaging in "class warfare." But smart Democrats will counter by echoing Vermont Independent Bernie Sanders's line: "The Republicans started waging a class war on working-class and middle-class Americans on January 20, 2001. All we are doing is fighting back on behalf of the victims of Administration policies."

§ *Stop avoiding issues of war and peace.* While the majority of Democrats in Congress opposed last fall's vote to hand Bush a blank check to wage war on Iraq, the party has no coherent stance regarding Iraq, North Korea or the war on terrorism. Instead of letting the agenda be set by Administration apologists like Daschle and Joe Lieberman—another presidential hopeful—senior Senate Democrats like Bob Graham, Dan Inouye and Carl Levin, all foes of the Iraq resolution, should be encouraged to fashion a critique that exposes the true costs of imperial ambitions (which empty the domestic treasury into the Defense Department trough), advance a pragmatic policy that supports containment rather than confrontation and position their party on the side of the multilateral approaches to foreign policy that polls show Americans favor.

§ *Fight Medicare privatization.* New Senate majority leader Bill Frist, a healthcare industry millionaire, has a lot of ambitious ideas about privatizing Medicare and Medicaid. Frist and the

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White House will seek to cloak their schemes in complex funding mechanisms, and they'll try to soften the blow by promising to increase cash flow for states that have historically felt cheated; Congressional Democrats must get some Ross Perot–style charts and start educating voters about how privatization of healthcare programs is as dangerous as privatization of Social Security.

§ *Challenge appointments.* Bush will probably nominate at least one new Supreme Court Justice in 2003; he has already renominated Charles Pickering and Priscilla Owen, both previously rejected. Bush is also packing nonjudicial positions with extremists on issues ranging from abortion rights to environmental protection. Confirmation fights offer a chance not just to battle bad nominees but to highlight bad policies. Bush's Treasury Secretary pick, CSX Corporation CEO John Snow, was guaranteed a pension of $2.4 million a year for life, yet the Administration wants to undermine workers' pension protections. Why not oppose Snow unless he pledges to preserve pension rights for all Americans? Snow's confirmation hearings also provide a chance to revisit corporate corruption questions Democrats let slide last year.

§ *Refuse to let Trent Lott's resignation end the debate about Republicans and race.* With a civil rights voting record that's as bad as Lott's, Frist represents only a stylistic shift. Democrats should highlight the hypocrisy by a push for embracing the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights legislation to expand hate crimes laws, ban racial profiling and change the Administration's education-funding formulas.

§ *Build a grand coalition to defend civil liberties.* Bob Barr is working with the ACLU, and William Safire is condemning Administration assaults on basic freedoms. Isn't it time for Democrats to get serious about the Constitution? House Judiciary Committee chair James Sensenbrenner and ranking Democrat John Conyers have asserted their committee's right to monitor the Patriot Act's implications. That's a start and, with a score of cities passing resolutions urging the act's repeal, Democrats have plenty of "cover" for a defense of the Bill of Rights. JOHN NICHOLS

The Bush Tax Sham

On January 7 George W. Bush went to the Economic Club of Chicago to preview what he has been calling his "jobs and economic growth package," which he will formally present in his State of the Union address later this month. The Bush plan repackages old proposals to aid the wealthy (accelerate some of the tax cuts for the rich already passed) and newly fashionable ones (exclude dividend income from taxation), while throwing the rest of us only a few small sops like increasing the childcare credit and finally supporting extension of unemployment benefits to workers whose benefits recently ran out. Bush and his advisers are clearly attempting another neat bait-and-switch: providing more giveaways to the wealthy and corporations over future decades but selling the package as a quick economic stimulus that will help working Americans find jobs and economic security.

The Bush economic proposals are a sham. They make the tax system more unfair, they starve the public sector of resources for needed public investment and they will not revive growth, spur corporate investment or create jobs. Progressives should say so loudly and clearly. But they must also make sure the Democratic Party's plan for jobs and economic growth offers a real alternative to the Bush program.

Numerous 2002 election post-mortems by analysts like pollster Stan Greenberg (www.ourfuture.org/greenberg) and others have demonstrated how, especially on the key issue of the economy, Democrats failed to give voters a reason to vote for them and against Republican candidates, with disastrous results. This time progressive groups aren't waiting for the Democrats. A coalition led by the Campaign for America's Future, AFSCME and other national organizations has united behind a progressive plan for growth and jobs written by Larry Mishel, president of the Economic Policy Institute (www.epinet.org). The plan would stimulate consumer demand through a "wage bonus" tax cut that would put money into the pockets of middle- and low-income Americans. It would directly aid the states, where the worst fiscal crisis in decades is now forcing painful cuts in jobs and services. The plan would also extend unemployment assistance to the jobless and invest in public needs—like school construction—that can put people to work quickly. Altogether, the elements of the plan could quickly inject $175 billion in stimulus into the weak economy, which EPI estimates would create 1.5 million jobs. And it would do all this without making the tax system more unfair and without giving away a big part of the tax base.

Shortly after the election, progressive leaders went into action to urge Congressional Democrats to rally behind the Mishel stimulus plan or something like it. Calls from progressive groups and labor lobbyists convinced new House minority leader Nancy Pelosi to invite Mishel to present his plan to more than a hundred members of the Democratic caucus at a special December 9 economic forum. The Campaign for America's Future, labor groups and others have reached out to Senate Democratic leaders and to the Democratic Governors Association. On January 6 House Democrats released a modest version of the Mishel plan, and if we keep pushing, there's a good chance that all three Democratic proposals (Senate, House and governors) will be similar, in size and detail, to the Mishel plan.

Getting Democrats to agree on a plan won't mean much, however, unless progressives mobilize to show Democrats how to fight for it. There are encouraging signs. When the Campaign for America's Future called a meeting before the holidays to talk about an independent mobilization to fight the Bush initiative and to promote the progressive growth and jobs program, leaders of more than seventy national organizations showed up. Plans are being laid for a quick and intense coalition campaign that can operate not only in Washington but in communities all over the country—representing labor, women, seniors, churches, civil rights groups and many other citizen action organizations.

The informed press coverage of the Bush plan acknowledges most of the points we want to make about its inadequacy as an economic stimulus. Some reporters even describe it as more of a payoff to wealthy supporters than a real economic program. But then most go on to say that Bush is likely to get just about everything he's proposing, given his victory in November with GOP control of both houses of Congress.

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Progressives have to give the press something else to report: that there is growing outrage among the American people at a Bush program that claims to be for "growth and jobs" but that rewards only the GOP's wealthy and powerful supporters. We should spearhead a grassroots campaign to put public pressure on Democratic senators to support progressive tax cuts and not the regressive, wasteful ones. And to persuade some moderate Republican senators to vote in the national interest against any plan that will undermine the future fiscal solvency of our country. In short, we need to show Americans that progressives are building a movement (and a party) that knows what it is fighting for.

ROGER HICKEY

Roger Hickey is co-director of the Campaign for America's Future (www.ourfuture.org).

Long Live the Estate Tax!

There is a stunning disconnect between the terrible budget shortfalls facing states and localities and the priorities of federal tax-cutters. States face budget deficits of more than $60 billion for the coming year—and the ax is falling on mental health, education and children's healthcare. Libraries are being shuttered, tuitions increased and parks closed. Governors of all political persuasions talk about the need for massive federal relief to the states in the form of block grants and Medicaid subsidies.

Yet the President and Congressional tax-cutters are marching ahead with a $670 billion tax cut that could include elimination of dividend taxes and an acceleration of 2001 tax rate cuts. According to the Urban Institute–Brookings Institution Tax Policy Center, 42 percent of the benefits of the dividend tax cut will go to the richest 1 percent of taxpayers, whose incomes are above $330,000. These proposals have more to do with rewarding campaign contributors and lobbying patrons than with economic stimulus.

Also at the top of the domestic agenda is the push to make repeal of the federal estate tax permanent. Such a step will not have any short-term or long-term economic stimulus effect. But cutting $850 billion in revenue in the decade after the tax is phased out—money that would have been collected from the heirs of multimillionaires—will prolong the current fiscal crisis. Many states will feel the pain of revenue loss first because their inheritance and estate taxes are linked to the federal levy.

Today, the estate tax affects less than 2 percent of the richest households, those with wealth exceeding $1 million. A reformed estate tax, with wealth exemptions boosted to $3.5 million, would still generate tens of billions of dollars of revenue a year. Under such a reform, an estimated 6,000 estates a year, averaging $17 million each, would pay the tax. In Maine, Montana, Alaska and Mississippi—states where both senators have voted to completely eliminate the tax—the estimated number of estates paying the tax every year would be fewer than twenty-five.

Proposals to reform the tax have been blocked since 2000 by the "all or nothing" repeal lobby, which understands the peril of not having smaller estates as camouflage. Once exemptions rise above $3 million, it becomes impossible to find a credible and photogenic farmer or restaurant owner who will complain about what opponents call the "death tax." It's hard enough to find them now. The pro-repeal American Farm Bureau was asked to produce an example of a farmer who had lost a farm because of the estate tax. It could not identify a single one.

Lost in this debate are the benefits to our country of maintaining an estate tax. Originally passed in 1916, the estate tax was a fundamentally American response to the excesses of the Gilded Age. Populist reformers labored for the three decades before 1916 to pass federal income and estate taxes in order to shift the tax burden, mostly in the form of nineteenth-century tariff duties and excise taxes, off of Midwestern and Southern farm states and onto the wealthy Northeastern states. But underlying the movement for an estate tax was a recognition that too much concentrated wealth and power was putting our democracy at risk. We had fought a revolution to reject hereditary political and economic power—and the dizzying inequalities of the Gilded Age violated a fundamental American ideal of equality of opportunity.

We are now in a second Gilded Age. Instead of taking steps that would strengthen our democracy, we're heading backward to the wealth inequalities of a century ago. We need to preserve the estate tax in states and at the federal level for exactly the reason it is under assault. In a democracy, we should be offended when the power of concentrated wealth brazenly attempts to shape the terms of policy debate and dictate the rules of our society.

BILL GATES SR. AND CHUCK COLLINS

Bill Gates Sr., co-chair of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and Chuck Collins, co-founder of United for a Fair Economy and Responsible Wealth, are the authors of Wealth and Our Commonwealth: Why America Should Tax Accumulated Fortunes *(Beacon).*

The Right Drug Rx

With a doctor in charge of the Senate, compassionate conservatism is well positioned to run roughshod over the issue that traditionally worked well for Democrats—healthcare. The Republicans' parsimonious plan for a senior citizen prescription-drug benefit will be among the first issues taken up by the new Congress. The Bush Administration has signaled that it wants to link the benefit to turning Medicare over to the insurance companies—legislation that Senator Bill Frist, the new majority leader, knows all too well, since he sponsored it in previous sessions. It doesn't matter to the privatizers that Medicare + Choice plans, the government's pilot project on privatization, have been a disaster almost everywhere they've been tried. They cherry-picked the relatively healthy seniors while subjecting the frail elderly to canceled policies, higher co-payments and burdensome extra charges. Yet the Republicans are intent on using prescription drugs as a wedge for their long-term goal of privatizing the entire government-run program. Given the confusion they were able to spread about drugs during the recent campaign—fueled by the tens of millions of dollars the pharmaceutical industry poured into surreptitious advertising campaigns—they may well get their way, unless Democrats find their voice on the crucial drug issue.

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COMMENT

Defenders of Medicare must be crystal clear about why the pharmaceutical manufacturers have been so intent on derailing the Democrats' senior citizen drug plan. You'd think the industry would prefer a plan that spends nearly $600 billion on drugs in the next eight years over one that spends about half that amount. Moreover, under the Democratic plan, more seniors would be taking more drugs, because its lower co-pays and more generous benefits would encourage them to fill their prescriptions or stop cutting their pills in half to make ends meet.

There is one reason for the industry's visceral opposition to the Democrats' plan: It is government-run. That means the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS, the agency formerly known as HCFA) would begin meddling in how the taxpayers' money gets spent, just as it currently sets the fees that hospitals and doctors receive from Medicare. (Little-known fact: Medicare costs have gone up much slower than other healthcare costs in recent years—and are well below private health insurance premiums.) CMS might one day establish lists of preferred drugs and use its purchasing power to negotiate lower prices for drugs on the list—a fate the drug industry wants to avoid at all costs.

The potential of pro-consumer government intervention in the drug marketplace was revealed in dramatic fashion in December when the National Institutes of Health (NIH) released the results of one of the most ambitious studies it has ever undertaken: an eight-year comparison of four common hypertension drugs. More than 20 million Americans, most of them seniors, take one of the 150 high-blood-pressure medicines on the market and another 20 million probably should. But which should their doctors prescribe: one of the old diuretics that have been around since the 1950s and now cost pennies a day, or one of the "new and improved" agents like calcium channel blockers that the drug industry has promoted at a cost of billions of dollars over the past decade? The results of the study were conclusive: The cheap diuretic, which few doctors prescribe, worked best.

The implications of the research go far beyond the treatment of high blood pressure. The trial is a model for the role the federal government must play in an increasingly crowded drug marketplace if it is going to provide a drug benefit for senior citizens that taxpayers can afford. Many of the drugs that have emerged from industry labs in recent years to treat common chronic conditions fall into the heart-medication pattern: They're either variations of existing drugs already on the market or entries that seek to treat what older drugs—usually coming off patent—already treat with proven success. They're called me-too drugs, as in, "We want an entry into that lucrative market, too."

Congress must help seniors and physicians sort out the confusion. First, it should revise the rules at the Food and Drug Administration so that drug companies are required not only to test new drugs for safety and efficacy but also to submit data that compare them to already existing therapies. The government should then give NIH a new mandate to systematically conduct comparison trials like the high-blood-pressure trial. (Only in the rarest of cases does a drug company conduct such tests, preferring to hire a small army of salespersons to distribute the results of the latest industry-funded clinical trials and let the best marketing team win.) This is not to say that new drug approvals should hinge on proving their superiority. Industry spokespersons point out that there can be a positive side to me-too drugs—for example, some patients don't respond well to the best drug in a class. But government-mandated comparisons would not stop a company that wants to bring an effective drug to market.

Industry will wail that the additional clinical testing will drive up the cost of approving new drugs and choke off innovation. Just the opposite will occur. A new requirement that drug companies test their latest offerings against existing medicines will force them to focus their R&D budgets on truly innovative new medicines, while NIH comparative trials will inform doctors about the best clinical practices. In the long run, that will benefit patients, the drug industry and the practice of medicine. It will also begin modernizing Medicare for its onrushing confrontation with the baby-boom generation. The program doesn't need to be turned over to the insurance industry, which has already failed miserably at holding down healthcare costs. The government must use science and regulation creatively to give seniors the best medicine at a price society can afford. MERRILL GOOZNER

Merrill Goozner, who teaches journalism at New York University and is a 2001–2002 Kaiser Media Fellow, is completing a book about pharmaceutical innovation, to be published by the University of California.

Dixiecrats and the GOP

Why should anyone have been surprised that the senator who led the Republican Party of 2002 paid homage to the States Rights Party of 1948? Those Dixiecrats fatally extolled by Trent Lott at the hundredth birthday celebration of their onetime presidential nominee Strom Thurmond were very much a template for today's Republican Party. Lott's expedient demotion does not change the core affinity between the two par-

(Continued on Page 24)

CALVIN TRILLIN

THE QUESTION OF NORTH KOREA

Korea has the bomb, but not to worry.
It's not a crisis. No, we needn't hurry
To get inspections back. Why try to spot
The weapons they already say they've got?
Containment's fine, no reason for attack.
The threat, we've said for months, is just Iraq.
And why destroy Saddam but still contrive
To let this wicked Kim Jong Il survive?
Because one wicked tyrant must remain
To run against in Bush's next campaign.

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JIM HIGHTOWER

The Wellstone Way

During my days as Texas agriculture commissioner, a farmer pointed out to me that you can count the seeds in an apple, but you can't count the apples in a seed. I remembered the farmer's pithy observation when thinking recently about our departed friend Paul Wellstone, for he was a particularly productive political seed, and we'll be harvesting the bounty of his work for a long time. Much has been written about Paul as a model for Democratic gutsiness—his principled stands for example, against George W.'s tax giveaways to the rich and against Bush's knee-jerk Iraq attack. But Paul made another contribution to modern-day progressive politics that might be even more fructiferous.

Paul showed that grassroots matters. Indeed, it was central to his electoral strategy, not only in his underfunded, lovably quirky first campaign but all the way through his last. In a time when the prevailing wisdom of nearly all national Democratic pols is that "strategy" amounts to grabbing all the corporate bribe money you can get, then throwing all of it at the television screen, Paul put an unheard-of 40 percent of his 2002 campaign budget of $10 million into recruiting, training, mobilizing and nurturing a massive army of door-to-door volunteers.

Practicing What He Preached

■ Wellstone, who had long been a community organizer and had taught the strategy of political movements at Carleton College, put his high-touch organizing experience into practice from the start of his first campaign and never stopped. "It's the key to winning," says Wellstone campaign manager Jeff Blodgett.

Organizational oomph adds percentage points, and it was this extra that propelled Paul to the Senate—twice elected as an unabashedly liberal, populist, Jewish, exuberant, short professor from the Lutheran heartland of tall, reserved Minnesota. And when his plane went down two weeks before last fall's vote, he was six points up over the tall and toothy Republican, Norm Coleman, whom Bush and Cheney had handpicked and financed, and was poised with 5,000 trainee and field-tested volunteers eager to complete his action plan on Election Day. He was going to win.

Paul's strategy began with the exact opposite tack from that currently advocated by the Democratic Leadership Council and most Democratic campaign consultants, who say the party's candidates should target moderate-to-conservative swing voters. Instead, Wellstone had a laser focus on his base—working-class people, small farmers, students, poor people, women, people of color, immigrants and so forth. Organize this base, expand it and turn it out was his plan.

Contrary to corporate-driven, mealy-mouthed DLC types, Paul understood that the key to turnout is *turn on*. He pounded a consistent message of economic populism that let ordinary folks know he was on their side, that he was the candidate battling the insurance companies and the oil industry.

Not only did this excite and rally base supporters, but—lo and behold—it also struck a chord with suburbanites, moderate Republicans and other persuadables who also don't like lobbyists writing all the laws. As a bonus, his "politics of conviction" appealed to voters who didn't generally agree with Paul's stands but were impressed that in this age of manufactured candidates, he stood for *something* and did so forcefully and enthusiastically.

Bodies, Not Lists

■ Such conviction generates genuine campaign energy, which produces volunteers. Most campaigns brag that they've got "thousands" of volunteers, but what they really have is a list. Dan Cramer, another Wellstone campaign leader and product of Paul's training program, points out something important: You don't have a volunteer until that person actually does something. The Wellstone program assured not only that his volunteers did something but that they did something useful and did it well. The most productive thing that a campaign can do is to talk directly to people—not send mail to them, phone them or reach for them through their television set but have a real person standing in front of them at their door, really engaging them.

This requires a major campaign investment in people, training them to be effective messengers and to develop their own leadership skills. Thus was created Camp Wellstone. This camp consisted of a series of intense, two-day training retreats, each involving 125 or so mostly young people who either wanted to volunteer, wanted to become professional organizers or wanted eventually to run for office.

They started with Organizing 101 and went to the graduate level, some becoming trainers themselves. The camps were supplemented with a series of three-hour Saturday trainings around the state, and the upshot was that in his last campaign, Wellstone had some 15,000 volunteers with some level of training, including that 5,000-person, door-knocking army, which included door-knocking captains, door-knocking centers and other infrastructure to make it effective.

Yes, this is expensive, but not as expensive as television's air wars, and having people on the ground is more effective. Such deep organizing not only produces victories; it also surfaces and develops a pool of skilled talent, builds a progressive grassroots infrastructure for organizing battles and—most important—nurtures future generations of leaders.

Paul was the seed, and it continues to bear fruit. We should plant many more such progressive seeds across America's grassroots, and Jeff Blodgett intends to do just that. He's now establishing a center to continue Camp Wellstone. He hopes to hold ten such camps around the country this year and twenty next year. To help make it happen, to host one, to attend—to spread the Wellstone seed—contact blodgett@Wellstone.org. Contributions can be made to the Wellstone Center, PO Box 14377, St. Paul, MN 55114.

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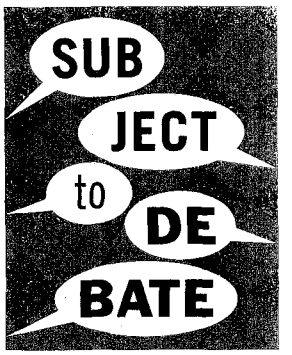
KATHA POLLITT

They Know When You Are Sleeping



One of my cherished childhood memories is of my petite, polite mother closing the front door firmly on two hulking FBI agents who wanted to come in and ask her questions. "I don't have to talk to you," she informed them in a steely voice, and she didn't. Wow, Mom! I can't swear to all the details—were the agents really so big, or was I just little? and did they really wear hats and trench coats, or have I dressed them to fit the 1950s stereotype?—but I do have a distinct memory of them casually lifting the lids from our streetside garbage cans as they left and peering inside, like cooks checking the stockpot. I doubt they really expected to find secret papers tossed in with the banana peels and steak bones; they were simply making a point. After my mother died, I sent away for her FBI file, which revealed, among other more serious invasions of privacy, that every year the FBI would phone our house on a pretext to make sure we still lived there. Honestly, hadn't they noticed that the phone book has addresses too? Your government dollars at work.

But why wallow in ancient history? In the wake of September 11, spying on citizens is back in all its careless glory. Indeed, it appears it never really went away. For example, my old friend Barbara Levy Cohen and her husband, Mark Cohen, are among the many represented by an ACLU lawsuit against the Denver Police Department. The Colorado branch of the ACLU announced last March that it had learned that the DPD had conducted surveillance and maintained "criminal intelligence files" since the 1950s (!) on people engaged in constitutionally protected political activities. Soon after, Mayor Wellington Webb admitted that "the issues that have been raised by the ACLU as well as others are legitimate" and that files existed on 3,200 individuals and 208 organizations, from the Million Mom March to the "criminal extremist" American Friends Service Committee, the Rocky Mountain Peace and Justice Center and NARAL.

As always seems to be the case with police files, the Denver dossiers are full of egregious misinformation and dark comedy. Barbara, a serious, mild-mannered secretary who, when not organizing around Native American and fair-trade issues, likes to read and go to the movies, is identified as having a "direct relationship" with an "outlaw biker" gang involved with "narcotics, weapons." (Not true, Barbara says, for the record.) Mark's file contains a group photograph with an arrow pointing to him—only it's not him. Margaret Taniwaki, a Japanese-American woman who spent time as a child in a World War II internment camp in California, is identified as "Caucasian" (maybe they meant to write "Asian"?); her ex-husband of twenty years has a file because she drove a car registered in his name. Sister Antonia Anthony, a 74-year-old nun who belonged to a pro-Zapatista organization called the Chiapas Coalition, was cited as supporting the overthrow of the Mexican government—which would make her more of a firebrand than the Zapatistas themselves.

But there are more serious items, too. Glenn Morris, chair of the political science department at the University of Colorado, Denver, and member of the leadership council of the Colorado American Indian Movement (AIM), had a death threat listed in his files: The police knew about it but never passed it on. While Cassandra Medrano and Pavlos Stavropoulos were in Greece, another couple used their car to drive to an antiglobalization demonstration; that couple's 9-year-old child—listed as a "reliable" source in the files—gave a police officer information about her parents that the DPD misassigned to Medrano and Stavropoulos; using this "information," the DPD started a file on Medrano and added to its file on Stavropoulos. Do we want to live in a society where fourth-graders are considered reliable sources, and in which cops probe children for information about their parents on the basis of political beliefs and activities that are legal?

What causes do "criminal extremists" favor in Denver? Besides reproductive rights, good works and pacifism, apparently they are keen on Native American rights: "Of the files I've seen," Barbara tells me, "three-quarters mention AIM and protests against Columbus Day, which is a big issue here in Denver." The Direct Action Network, an antiglobalization/fair trade group, also caught the inquisitorial eye: So much so that at one point the DPD, aware that its usual infiltrators had become familiar faces, asked a detective from the vice and drugs control bureau to attend a DAN meeting undercover. Given such practices, it's not surprising that another popular cause is protesting abuses of the citizenry by the Denver Police Department. Barbara's and Mark's files note that in 1991 they co-signed a letter published in the *Colorado Statesman*, a local weekly, criticizing the police for racism. Why does this classic exercise of the First Amendment belong in secret dossiers?

Not that spying on the nonviolent would ever be right, but it's worth noting that the Denver debacle was facilitated by the police's lack of training in the use of the Orion Scientific Systems software program: Crucial decisions about how to categorize and input information (what constituted "criminal extremism," for example) were made in an unprofessional, whimsical way. Other cities in which secret police files have been uncovered tell a similar story of inept paranoia: Until the mid-1980s, four years after passage of a state law barring police spying on nonviolent political activities, Portland police kept tabs on a wide variety of groups, including the Northwest Oregon Voter Registration Project, a food co-op, a bicycle repair collective, a group setting up a rape hotline and a battered women's shelter.

These days, local authorities are eager to jettison longstanding restraints imposed after abuses in the 1970s and go back to their old-fashioned ways. The New York City Police Department, for example, announced that it wants to be able to spy on citizens without having to persuade an official three-member panel that it has just cause—even though it cited no examples of this process hindering an investigation. In a fine twist, the NYPD plans to use an updated version of the Orion software employed to such notable effect by the Denver PD.

Just remember: You don't have to talk to them. ■

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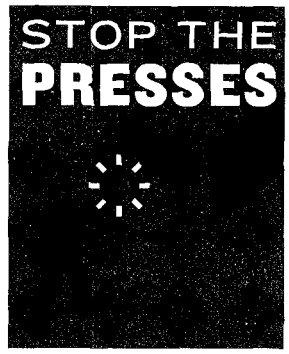
ERIC ALTERMAN

The Roamin' Empire



During the 2000 campaign, candidate George W. Bush proclaimed that America must be "humble in how we treat nations that are figuring out how to chart their own course." But that was then. September 11 opened up a door through which such rhetoric might be unceremoniously tossed. Its replacement: a decade-in-the-making, neoconservative national security strategy envisioning a global US military empire and a degree of imperial ambition with few, if any, historical parallels.

What makes the new policy's promulgation politically possible is the lack of interest most Americans evince in foreign affairs, save matters of war and peace. The market-minded media follow suit, and the net result is a thoroughly undemocratic state of affairs, in which the politico/military resources of the most powerful nation in human history become the plaything of a tiny group of shifting "players" whose identities change with every issue: AIPAC gets the Middle East; Miami gets Cuba; multinationals get the WTO and the destruction of Kyoto; Christian fundamentalists (these days) get population planning, etc.

If the enunciation of the Bush/Cheney/Rumsfeld/Wolfowitz/Perle Pax Americana doctrine is to have any benefit, it will be in finally forcing the consideration of an alternative vision. Somewhat amazingly, essays questioning the costs and value of the new American empire recently graced the simultaneous covers of *US News & World Report* (by Jay Tolson), *The New York Times Magazine* (by Michael Ignatieff) and *Mother Jones* (by George Packer and Todd Gitlin). Packer, addressing himself primarily to liberals, properly points out that the Democrats have had no foreign policy since Vietnam. He notes, "The usual response is to moan about the party's spineless leaders, but...they can't stand up because they have nowhere to stand, no alternate vision of what purpose America's enormous power in the world should serve."

Packer speaks for many liberals when he writes: "A truly liberal foreign policy starts with the idea that the things American liberals want...for their own country—liberty and equality ensured by collective action, through government and civil society—should be America's goal for the rest of the world as well." He imagines "nation building on a far greater scale than we've seen—not just peacekeeping in Afghanistan, but economic development in Uganda and support for democratic forces in Iran."

Yet these were exactly the goals Lyndon Johnson hoped to achieve in Vietnam. As the liberal realist Stanley Hoffmann observes in the January 13 *American Prospect*, there is no indication we are any more competent to carry this kind of thing off now. Hoffmann warns, "We don't have the skill or the knowledge it would take to manipulate the domestic politics of many countries, or even to choose the right leaders for other people. It is blind hubris to assume that we will 'improve' the world by projecting on others a model of democracy that has worked—not without upheavals—in the rich and multicultural United States but has little immediate relevance in much of the rest of the world."

What's more, given Americans' lack of interest in this kind of adventure, even if we did possess the requisite knowledge, skill and patience to pull off these worthy goals, it's unclear where the necessary popular support would come from. As I argued in *Who Speaks for America? Why Democracy Matters in Foreign Policy*, good foreign policy is a lot harder than it looks (and than most liberals are willing to admit). Tocqueville observed that in foreign affairs, "democratic governments do appear decidedly inferior to others," as foreign policy demands none of the good qualities peculiar to democracy, and insists on the cultivation of those sorely lacking. Democracies find it "difficult to coordinate the details of a great undertaking and to fix on some plan and carry it through with determination," and have "little capacity for combining measures in secret and waiting patiently for the result." The historian Walter LaFeber calls this "the Tocqueville problem in American history." How can a "democratic republic, whose vitality rests on the pursuit of individual interests with a minimum of central governmental direction, create the necessary national consensus for the conduct of an effective, and necessarily long-term, foreign policy?"

When Bush claims Ariel Sharon to be a "man of peace" and appoints the Iran/*contra* criminal Elliott Abrams to head the Middle East office of the National Security Council, he makes a mockery of both the English language and human decency, but he risks nothing politically. The sources of support for a Likud-driven US foreign policy are real and identifiable. Where are the mobilizable political armies on the liberal team?

Consistently negative polling data convinced Karl Rove and George Bush not to risk the launch of an unprovoked war against Iraq without the cover of the United Nations Security Council. These data confirm the unstinting and largely unreported dedication of the American public to multilateralism in foreign policy. At this writing, thanks to the demands of the public, the war has been delayed, somewhat tamed and possibly may be avoided. But while a mass public intervention can prevent or delay a war here and there, it cannot successfully upend the Administration's drunken unilateralist bender that has (so far) undermined the Kyoto agreement, the International Criminal Court, the small arms treaty, the ABM accord, the chemical and biological weapons convention and virtually every other collective effort to insure a more peaceful, prosperous world. To win those battles, the public requires representation for its values within the foreign policy establishment. This is almost entirely lacking today.

In other words, yes, we have no foreign policy. But more important, we have no political strategy, period. We need the former before we can enjoy the luxury of attempting to sell the latter. This means paying heed to what Americans genuinely want from the world, as well as what the world wants from us. Those "humble" words might just have been the wisest ever uttered by George W. Bush. Perhaps liberals might begin the task ahead by figuring out how to take them back. ■

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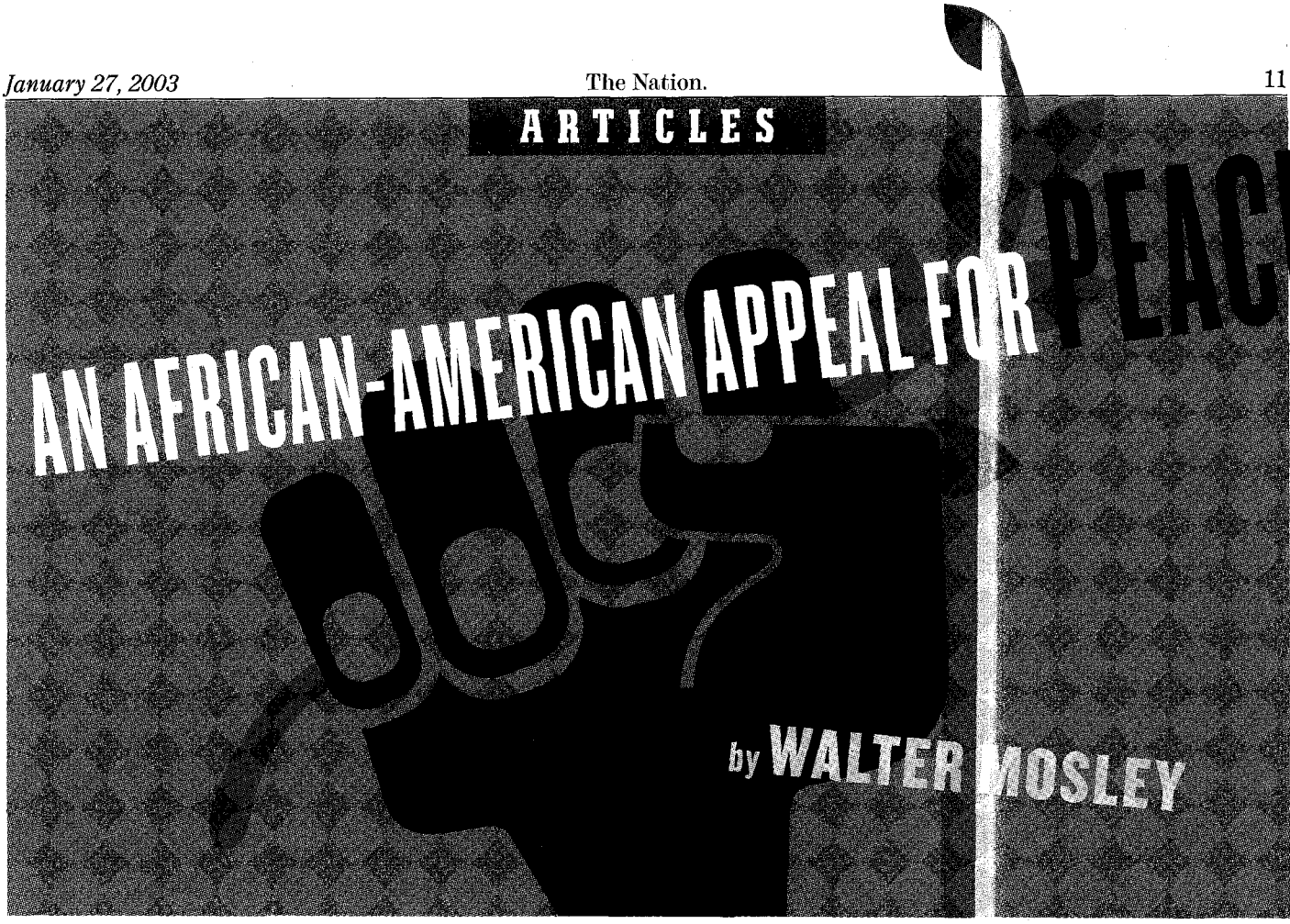
ARTICLES

AN AFRICAN-AMERICAN APPEAL FOR PEACE



by WALTER MOSLEY

On the morning of September 11, 2001, I was talking on the phone and looking down on the Hudson River from my southward-facing Greenwich Village apartment window. I heard a concussion, felt it almost. I looked around but saw nothing until my eyes rose up and caught sight of the World Trade Center. The gash on the upper side of the north tower was black and spewing smoke. There was also a trail of smoke down the left side of the building that went all the way to the street.

I was confused about that trail of smoke. I tried to figure out how it fit with the smoking wound. It wasn't until some time later, when the second jetliner crashed into the southern tower, that I understood that downward trail of dark vapor.

That cascading column came to mean to me everything about the war that was forming in people's minds around the world. It was a sign that I couldn't read clearly, but still I knew there were deadly ramifications to its manifestation.

I won't belabor the story here. We all went through it: our own planes raining death and destruction down upon our nation's most identifiable and important cities and structures. The towers falling, the heroic struggles, the war being waged upon our one-time allies against the USSR—all of this presaged in that dense black column that dissipated within minutes of its inception.

For months after this event, I, like so many Americans, was lost in a kind of anxiety-ridden daze. I worried about world war, about radical religious extremists wresting the reins of power from some nation with nuclear capabilities. I worried about air travel and subway cars, about doomsday plagues and about my nation falling under the sway of fascist rule. There was a deep disquiet in my heart, and I didn't know how to get at it except by worrying about nebulous issues far beyond my immediate control.

This is, of course, how the human mind works. When we feel menaced, we try to protect ourselves by considering every possible threat that might arise. The problem in this case, however, was that there was no defense against falling jetliners, religious hardliners and the resort to unqualified nationalism.

The thing I feared most was the healing quality that time has on the human heart. I knew that after a while I would fall back into complacency—that I would learn to accept that which I knew was unacceptable.

Thousands of dark people are dying daily in the towns and villages and cities of Africa. We in the United States know this, but it doesn't seem to matter to us any more than a popular television show coming to the end of its run. Millions of people, maybe more than ever in the history of the world, are languishing in slavery and forced labor in Sudan and Haiti and many other countries. There are even slaves here in the United States, men and women trapped in the modern growth industry of private prisons, not to mention those caught in the traffic of forced prostitution.

Every night on every station there is some sitcom that makes a joke about what happens to young men in prison—but still we do nothing. Not only are these men raped, humiliated and emotionally shattered, but they become infected with AIDS and hepatitis C, diseases that they bring home to our communities. And we, literally, just laugh.

War and poverty, disease and hopelessness are ravaging half the world, while the other half wonders how long it will be able to stay out of the maelstrom.

All this is our responsibility. Every child wasting away under his mother's powerless gaze. Every Muslim burned by a Hindu. Every innocent citizen blown up by a suicide bomber or crushed

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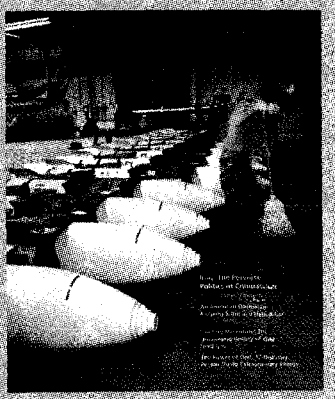

In the January/February issue of *Orion*:

When Compassion Becomes Dissent
David James Duncan on Iraq and the effects of war rhetoric on our language—and on our people

An American Obsession
Keeping Score in a Hybrid Car with Bill McKibben

The New Eden
Hope or prophecy? The disquieting paintings of Odd Nerdrum

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by an onrushing, revenge-drunk tank. I know we are responsible because US dollars have found their way into, and out of, every battlefield, every hospital bed and every pocket of every terrorist in the world.

We—black men and women in every stratum of American society—live in and are part of an ecosystem of terror. We, descendants of human suffering, are living in a fine mansion at the edge of a precipice. And the ground is caving in under the weight of our wealth and privilege.

All this I saw in that column of smoke.

It is time for this nation to come up with a new program: a new notion of civil rights and peaceful negotiation, an international concept of harmony among the wide variety of humanity extant in the world of the twenty-first century. And who is better qualified than African-Americans for this task?

We know from bitter experience what it is to be shortchanged every day, from cradle to grave. We know the lies propagated by the media, law enforcement and even our own government. We know that the concepts of equality and fairness are actually only commodities distributed by the institutions of capital. We know because when we went to the store for our fair share, we were told, for centuries, that there was a shortage and that we'd have to wait until there was an increase in production.

It wasn't until we shouted, "No more!" and demanded our share that things began, no matter how slowly, to change.

The world today is caught in a paroxysm of violent upheaval. In order to contain and lessen the chaotic spiral of carnage and bloodshed, we must make a commitment to peace. We must declare what it is we feel that all people in the world should expect and conversely what we all deserve.

I'm not sure that there should be one set of expectations, however. All of us have a different view of the world, but I would like to put forward the following universal ideas as the rules of fair treatment that I personally would like to live by:

§ First, I cannot be free while my neighbor is wearing chains.

§ Second, I cannot know happiness while others are forced to live in despair.

§ Third, I cannot know health if plague and famine thrive outside my door.

§ And last, but not least, I cannot expect to know peace if war rides forward under my flag and with my consent.

I believe the institution of these simple statements would halt the rampant onslaught of the haves—in whose numbers many of us are counted—against the have-nots. Murdered and enslaved children, no matter what their color or gender or faith, suffer because of our failings. Starving millions go hungry so that we may dine in comfort, creating new enemies.

How do we know that someone is our enemy?

This is the first question we must answer. Who poses a threat to us? Who hates us to the degree that they are ready to do us harm? Who has contempt for our security and peace of mind?

For many people, the answer is quick and easy. It's the secret terrorist, the suicide bomber, the foreign religious radical who whips up the masses into a frenzy of hatred for America, its citizenry and all who ally themselves with us.

And certainly there is some validity to this answer. When innocent American blood is shed upon our streets, when intricate

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conspiracies are being hatched, even as you read these words, that are aimed at disrupting, disabling and even destroying the American way of life, then we have every right to consider these schemers our enemies.

I would push this definition even further, however. Not only are those who plot against us the enemy, but any assassin, any murderer is our enemy. We represent civilization and sophistication, while they stand for chaos. We cannot say that murder is wrong only within our borders or if committed against our citizens. If some Peruvian woman or Nigerian child is assassinated by political zealots, then that assassin is also our foe. He has to be because once we accept, condone or excuse the wrongful death of any human being, we have negated our own right to expect justice and respect. This is why there was an executive order that America cannot participate in the assassination of foreign leaders. If we can kill them, then they have the right to kill us.

Our enemies are the lawless dregs of a world gone half-mad. It doesn't matter if they feel in their hearts that the crimes they commit are somehow justified. It doesn't matter if they are exonerated by their peers or religious leaders or by the moral interpretation of some government official. Murder in our realm is wrong, and anyone committing this crime is The Enemy of mankind—no exceptions allowed.

We African-Americans know what it is like to be treated as less than human, as inferior to our white counterparts.

The Enemy is the same to all people, all nations. He is not a soldier, a law unto himself, or, sadly, unknown among our own number. He lives here among us and over there with them. He is a man, or woman, who has denied the common morality accepted by people everywhere in the world. He is not just my enemy, but The Enemy of everyone, everywhere.

If you accept this argument, then identifying those with whom we are allied is simple and straightforward: Our allies are those who do not accept murder, terrorism and assassination as valid political discourse.

Our enemies are all persons involved in causing the death of others—either actively or from a consciously passive posture—for political, nationalistic or economic ends. If Osama bin Laden ordered the deaths of the Americans in the tragedy of September 11, then he is The Enemy. If our agents caused the deaths of innocent Kurds, Panamanians or Guatemalans, then they are The Enemy. We can't have it one way and not the other. We can't say that an American life is worth more than a Sudanese life. We can't condone the violent actions of our armies and secret police if we condemn the actions of others who use violence, torture and intimidation to obtain their ends.

Human life is sacred. We African-Americans know what it is like to be treated as less than human, as inferior to our white counterparts. We know the extent of abuse that can be heaped upon people because they are not seen as part of the human race. How can we stand by as our nation, while claiming peaceful intentions, wages war on people who may not have played any part in the crimes against us?

Even if we condone military actions, we might at least claim some culpability for the havoc visited upon a mostly innocent population. The death of innocent children is not "collateral damage." The wartime death of children is the murder of innocents. And if we commit these murders, then we are also The Enemy of civilization.

This is a tough argument, because it runs against the grain of present-day American nationalism and fear. America has clearly identified its enemies. They are mostly the dusky-skinned or black zealots of the Islamic religion. They are almost all Arabic and, coincidentally, they sit on some of the greatest oil reserves in the world today. We believe they are a threat because their religion is different from that of most Americans, because their religion is the fastest-growing faith in the world today, because their population tops the billion mark and because many millions of this billion hate us.

That hatred, we believe, has led to terrorist attacks on us and our allies. Maybe this is true. Maybe their hatred is being expressed in religious terms. Maybe there are even those who believe in the sanctity of their violent acts against us. But the gods are put in place to protect their acolytes. If Middle Eastern religions speak out against America, I doubt that it is because our women don't cover their faces or that we practice another religion. They have been pressed into poverty and ruled by the whims of the almighty dollar; the cult of hatred against us is founded (I believe) in capitalism, not upon ancient texts or cultural differences. We Americans are seen as economic invaders who attempt to control everything that many people elsewhere in the world see as sacred.

The Middle Eastern populations are our neighbors, our fellow human beings. It is paramount that we make peace with them if it is at all possible. And not peace on our terms, but a just and equitable peace.

In order to do this, we have to look beyond the TV shows and the newspapers, past our fears and doubts. We must redefine our notion of The Enemy, taking into account the role and actions of our own political and economic systems.

The entrance of the United States into the global struggle, which includes terrorism, has caused some permanent changes in our national psyche. One of these changes is the dawning realization that we are hated by so many people in the world at large.

We African-Americans have been living with people who have hated and despised us since the day we were first taken from our homelands and carted off to the plantation. The White Citizens Council, the Ku Klux Klan, the American Nazi Party, the Supreme Court and many others have taken venomous swipes at our inherent rights. We've been kept out of neighborhoods, voting booths, country clubs and educational institutions because of our skin. No one person had to do something wrong in order for us all to be vilified and hated.

But all that time, we only wanted to be free members of the American society. You could hate us all you want, but just let us have freedom and equality!

This essay is adapted from Walter Mosley's What Next: A Memoir Toward World Peace, *out in February from Black Classic Press.*

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African-Americans know how to live with hatred. We've been stopped for walking in the wrong neighborhood, lynched for looking up the wrong skirt. We never liked the mistreatment, but we never gave up the dream, either. We know in our hearts that all people are equal and essentially good. We hold that goal to our breasts and move ahead without hesitation. Let's keep that up during this crisis. Our backs are strong enough to bear up under the weight of the hate people have for us. And let's critique the fainthearted other Americans who feel they can't bear living in a world where they are despised.

The problems the world faces today cannot be solved by superior strength alone. We Americans must use our hearts if we want to face the hatred confronting us. And we must be able to look critically at our own actions and motivations if we want to understand our enemies.

This kind of empathy comes hard for most Americans, because we have such a fuzzy understanding of our own history. Our past has always been depicted by images of upstanding white men conquering nature and "heathen foes." From the so-called primitive red man to Adolf Hitler, we've always seen ourselves as standing strong against the enemies of freedom and modernity. Sometimes our cause has been just, and often it has not. But never has an American campaign been so complex. Today we need more than John Wayne and the Winchester rifle. Today we need the subtle compassion of Black America, with its fine-honed attention to the etiquette of liberation.

Our collective freedom, fellow Americans, depends on our ability to defend the rights of others. All Americans should understand this concept, but I fear that it might only be Black America that has the historical perspective to move this notion from an idea into action. We, of all Americans, know what it's like to lose everything in order to come into alignment with the American Dream. Not only do we have a moral stake in protecting the innocent victims of the present war against terrorism, but we stand to profit, spiritually, from the process of working for peace.

Some of the greatest ambassadors representing American culture in the twentieth century have been black people. Louis Armstrong, Muhammad Ali, Martin Luther King Jr., Josephine Baker and many others have gone abroad, with or without our government's blessings, to show the world the beauty they have found here. They were men and women of peace. For more than a century, African-Americans have represented America's culture and its high moral ideals, not its penchant for economic domination. While the American government was selling arms to the world, we were delivering jazz. While US Presidents waged war on foreign ideals, African-Americans spoke of peace.

Today is just a continuation of that history. We have to get out there and work for peace. We have to reject the fearmongers and the profiteers. Certainly, we have to protect America. Certainly, we have to arrest and monitor those who have made it their express desire to harm our nation. But we must also remember that there will be no defense if the whole world hates us.

We must remember, the only true defense is peace. ■

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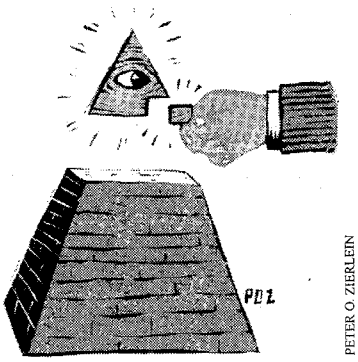
MONEY IS NEEDED FOR SOCIAL PROGRAMS. AND THE RICH HAVE MORE THAN THEIR SHARE.

Tax the Plutocrats!

GAR ALPEROVITZ

It's time to confront the central obstacle blocking a new progressive politics: the Democratic Party's abject fear of the truth that new taxes are going to be needed if the party is ever to offer—and finance—a dramatic program capable of mobilizing large numbers of working Americans, white, black and brown. The way forward is to go on the offensive by sharply delineating a strategy targeting America's plutocratic top 1–2 percent elite, plus the corporations they largely own. Changes in income and wealth patterns in recent years make it possible to do this without simultaneously alienating middle-income and middle-class suburban voters.



PETER O. ZIERLEIN

A progressive program worth fighting for would begin with fixing—improving, not reducing—Social Security; it would move on to prescription drugs, major reform of the healthcare system, support for broad-based college tuition assistance, serious day-care provision, an expansion of the earned-income tax credit. Public transportation, environmental and other infrastructure needs are also huge, between $60 billion and $100 billion a year in recent estimates. A serious effort might also add some tax relief for middle- and low-income families.

The first step is to stop compromising at the outset, thus eliminating any hope of offering something powerful that we can mobilize around over the long haul. Progressives must challenge the idea that the United States, the richest nation in the world, must always be the poor sister among the advanced nations—that our nonmilitary public sector, at 29.7 percent of GDP, must always lag behind Britain's (35.8 percent), Germany's (43 percent), France's (44.8 percent) and, of course, that of countries like Sweden, at 50 percent.

Most Democrats have been afraid to demand such a program—and for good reason: They have been unable or unwilling to answer the obvious question of where the money will come from. In the near term, deficit spending is a reasonable, indeed, inevitable option—both to move the economy out of the recession and to solve pressing public problems (beginning with the $67 billion state revenue shortfall). Ultimately, however, progressives must confront the tax issue.

Until recently, the Democratic Party, as a party, has been almost totally silent on taxes—cravenly so: Twenty-eight House Democrats and twelve Democratic senators voted for the Bush tax cuts. For the most part, the party has been on the defensive—reacting, after the fact, to each new Bush tax-cutting initiative. Even as Democrats fussed over how to respond to the last Bush offensive, the Administration has revved up its new campaign for greater elite and corporate tax cuts—and, amazingly, is now arguing that the poor are undertaxed. (Just ignore Social Security taxes, the most regressive part of the system, ignore the huge redistribution of income in favor of the rich in recent years, scrap all thought of capacity to pay as an element in tax policy, etc.)

If Democrats are unable to redefine the long-term politics of taxation, they will always be on the defensive, trying to play catch-up in response to each new right-wing initiative. To be sure, some members of Congress have put together a short-term stimulus package involving tax rebates, and some liberals have urged rescinding the Bush top income and estate reductions. But even if this were done, it would only take us back to where we were when Bush took office—which, in turn, would provide little capacity for Democrats to go on the offensive with a positive, longer-term program capable of exciting the basic Democratic constituencies.

New Democrats are probably right that it is politically impossible to tax the white suburban middle class much further. They are wrong, however, to suggest that this is the end of the story. The place where the money can—and must—be found is where it is concentrated: at the very top and with the corporations. This also defines a sharp and very clear political target—one that ultimately puts the other side on the defensive.

There has been an extraordinary upward redistribution of income in recent decades, especially at the very top: The top 1 percent garnered almost 15 percent of the nation's income for itself in 1998—up from just over 8 percent in 1980. This is more income than was received by the more than 100 million people in the bottom 40 percent of the population taken together!

Currently, the top marginal tax rate is 38.6 percent, scheduled to drop to 35 percent by 2006. The dramatic capacity of elites to take care of themselves is etched in the changes they have secured over the past half-century. The top marginal rate was 91 percent to and through the Eisenhower years, indeed continuing up to 1964; 70 percent from 1965 to 1981; 50 percent from 1982 through 1986 (for the first Reagan Administration). If those earning $1 million or more in 1999 (a recent year for which data are available) were to face the same effective rate as top elites faced in the mid-1950s, tax revenues could increase by $130 billion (this would involve raising taxes on only slightly more than one-tenth of 1 percent of all households).

In the Eisenhower era, corporations paid an average 25 percent of the federal tax bill; they paid only 10 percent in 2000 and 7 percent in 2001. The effective tax rate on corporate income amounted

Gar Alperovitz, Lionel R. Bauman Professor of Political Economy at the University of Maryland, is working on a book on progressive change in the twenty-first century. He is the author of The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb *(Knopf) and, most recently (with Thad Williamson and David Imbroscio),* Making a Place for Community *(Routledge).*

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to 47 percent in 1960; it is only 35 percent today (before tax credits). Closing the most egregious shelters and returning to the 1960 tax rate could increase annual revenues by $110 billion.

A progressive political strategy that sharply defined the difference between the very top of the income and wealth distribution and the vast majority could benefit the bottom 98 percent of society—i.e., those with incomes of less than roughly $200,000.

The conventional wisdom is that you can't tax the rich. However, something profound has happened to America in recent years. The super-elite—the people Kevin Phillips and Paul Krugman now term the new "plutocracy"—live in a very, very different world from most Americans, and in a radically different culture. It is a world where homes cost $5–10 million and where $5,000 grills, $3,000 alligator-skin shoes, $17,500 Patek Philippe wristwatches, $63,000 Lexus LX470 sport-utility vehicles and $14,000 Hermès Kelly handbags are commonplace. At the height of the 1998–99 stock market, Phillips observes, "vanity and consumption moved toward a new post-Veblen fulfillment.... Behind an increasingly Latin American array of gates, guards, walls, and distance, the scarcely visible displays included helicopter delivery of meals from one's favorite Manhattan, Los Angeles, or Florida restaurant...." A tour guide he cites notes: "Some trees now gracing Hamptons estates have been driven down from the Pacific Northwest in refrigerated tractor-trailers, and some have been planted with the aid of military-size Sikorsky helicopters to obviate the necessity of rutting the lawns with wheel tracks."

Currently, the top marginal tax rate is 38.6 percent. It was 91 percent through the Eisenhower years and continuing up to 1964.

Most people have not caught up with what Krugman terms "the tectonic shifts" that have taken place: "The rich have always been different from you and me, but they are far more different now than they were not long ago—indeed, they are as different now as they were when F. Scott Fitzgerald made his famous remark." In the past, he observes, we were "a middle-class society. But that was another country."

The world of the new plutocracy is also a world of routine corruption and side deals in which millions of dollars are casually shifted into the pockets of the elites as part of "business as usual" corporate practice. The retirement package that GE's Jack Welch negotiated included an $86,000-a-year retainer for consulting services, use of GE corporate aircraft, a Manhattan apartment (including wine, laundry services, newspapers, flowers, condominium fees, cook, wait and housekeeping staff, postage and restaurant charges in the building)—plus tickets to sporting and cultural events.

Polls strongly suggest that the plutocracy is vulnerable to challenge. In 1998 Gallup found that 63 percent agreed with the statement that "money and wealth in this country should be more evenly distributed." Roughly seven in ten also complained that "the rich just get richer while the poor get poorer." Even in the period shortly after 9/11, when patriotism obscured many other concerns, the number who held this view fell only one percent, to 69 percent. Recent Harris polls have regularly found that an extraordinary 80–87 percent of the public believe big companies have "too much power and influence in Washington." The Enron and related accounting scandals only added to longstanding and deeply rooted public distrust. As Century Foundation senior fellow Ruy Teixeira has shown, we have reached a nadir in public opinion of large corporations: One 2002 poll found that only 15 percent felt a "great deal" or "quite a lot" of confidence in big business—the lowest number since pollsters started asking the question in 1986. Another showed that 38 percent saw big business as the "biggest threat to America's future," up from 22 percent as recently as October 2000 and again the highest level ever recorded for this question (asked since 1965).

Jeffrey Garten, dean of the Yale School of Management and a former Under Secretary of Commerce, follows the data closely. Hardly a populist, Garten believes citizen anger is ultimately likely to produce a backlash "as radical and as prolonged as the backlash against unbridled corporate power that took place during the first forty years of this century."

Two issues need to be sharpened over time: The first is "public need versus private greed." The second is simple fairness. A comprehensive, long-term tax program focused on the plutocracy and corporations and that aimed to go on the offensive might include:

§ Repeal of the Bush tax cuts at the top.

§ A return, ultimately, to the 50 percent top marginal tax rates of the first Reagan Administration.

§ Corporate taxes equivalent to those in force during the Nixon Administration.

§ A wealth tax of at least 1 percent.

Note especially the tax on wealth. Wealth is far, far more concentrated than income. A mere 1 percent of Americans owns just under 50 percent of financial wealth; a mere 5 percent owns almost 70 percent of financial wealth. Americans with incomes of more than $1 million (roughly 0.1 percent of all taxpayers) made more money from stock sales than the rest of the nation combined in recent years.

Most Western European nations tax wealth—in Sweden, the highest annual rate is 3 percent; at the low end of the scale is Switzerland, with a tax of only one third of a percent. The United States, however, for the most part only taxes the kind of wealth most people own—their home. Moreover, we tax the total value of the home even though most people actually own only a part of the house—i.e., their net property value after subtracting the mortgage amount they owe. We simply do not directly tax ownership of the kind of wealth which is concentrated in the hands of the plutocracy: stocks and bonds.

Repealing the Bush tax cuts would return $86.5 billion from the top 5 percent annually when fully phased in—or close to $800 billion over ten years if, as is likely, the tax cut is made permanent. Estimates by Brendan Leary of the University of Maryland suggest that returning to a tax structure similar to that of the first Reagan Administration could potentially capture an additional $90 billion from the top 2 percent. If corporate tax rates were returned to Eisenhower levels, tax revenues could increase by roughly $110 billion. A 1 percent tax on wealth (with a $1 million exemption) could bring in $90 billion a year. (A 3 percent wealth

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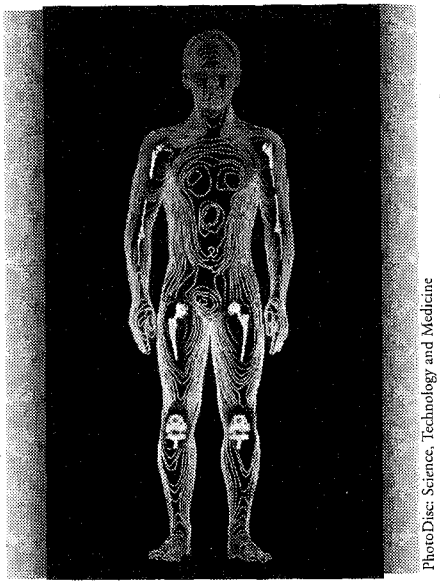

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tax with a $500,000 exemption could generate up to $290 billion.)

A long-term progressive strategy would also aim to build new ways to structure the ownership of wealth—for example, by offering Individual Development Accounts, through which the government would directly match the savings of the poor; and by introducing government-funded $5,000 capital grants at birth that, with additional annual federal contributions, could build a capital fund of roughly $50,000 for every individual by age 18. Wealth-holding to benefit "small publics" is also important: For example, federal legislation has helped create 11,000 Employee Stock Ownership Plans and related efforts, many of which are moving toward substantial, indeed, often majority-worker ownership of significant assets in their firms.

The key to winning acceptance of a bold program is to build support—rather than simply react to polls that register "something" about public attitudes before and in the absence of a serious effort to dramatize an alternative. Conservatives have understood this all along: Ten years ago few would have believed privatization of Social Security was an idea that could ever be taken seriously—or, for that matter, more recently Bush's deficit-producing tax cuts for the rich. Conservatives created what support such ideas have by taking a clear stand and then arguing forcefully for it.

A progressive strategy that went on the offensive to mobilize broad support would put those who attempt to protect the plutocracy and the corporations on the defensive. It would also help redefine the political spectrum as a whole: So long as the Democratic Party fails to take a clear economic stand, "faux-populist" conservatives will exploit cultural and racial issues to divide and conquer the majority. The bottom-line question to confront, however, is: Over the long haul is there any other way to achieve the policies most progressives in their hearts know are right? ■

US POLICIES ARE FANNING ANTI-AMERICANISM IN BOTH THE SOUTH AND THE NORTH.

A Dangerous Game in Korea

TIM SHORROCK

On New Year's Eve, one week after Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld warned that US forces were capable of "winning decisively" if North Korea's nuclear weapons program provoked a war, tens of thousands of South Koreans poured into the streets of Seoul to condemn the acquittals by a US military tribunal of two US soldiers who accidentally killed two schoolgirls last June. Many in the crowd also called for the withdrawal of the 37,000 US troops stationed in South Korea. A day earlier, President Kim Dae Jung, whose "sunshine policy" has led to an unprecedented degree of cooperation across the demilitarized zone, criticized the Bush Administration for seeking to end the standoff with North Korea through a program of economic intimidation called "tailored containment." "Pressure and isolation have never been successful with Communist countries," said Kim. Roh Moo Hyun, the former human rights lawyer who was elected president on December 19 on a platform demanding a more equal relationship with the United States, strongly endorsed Kim's stand. On January 7, the United States finally buckled to the pressure and offered to talk directly to Pyongyang about "its international obligations" to remain nuclear-free.

PETER O. ZIERLEIN

The protests, and Roh's warnings against unilateral US action, are the latest signs of a growing disconnect between South Korea and the United States. Anti-American sentiment has been rising steadily in South Korea since the 1980s over US support for a succession of military dictators and its refusal to embrace the yearning for national unification that peaked in 2000, when Kim traveled to Pyongyang for the first meeting between the presidents of North and South Korea. But it has risen significantly since Bush came to office. Many Koreans believe that Bush's curt dismissal of Kim's sunshine policy, his inclusion of Pyongyang in his "axis of evil" and his doctrine of pre-emptive strikes against potential enemies have sent an unmistakable message that the United States has no interest in a negotiated peace in Korea. Bush's public comments that he "loathes" Kim Jong Il and would like to see his government "topple" haven't helped either. South Koreans now go out of their way to tell foreign reporters that they view America as more dangerous than the police state to their north, and even defend North Korea's attempts to build nuclear weapons. "It can be said that there exists on the Korean Peninsula at present only confrontation between the Koreans in the North and the South and the United States," Pyongyang said in a New Year's broadcast that is closer to the truth than many Americans realize.

The standoff began in October, during the first high-level meeting between the Bush Administration and North Korea. After Assistant Secretary of State James Kelly presented US evidence of a uranium-enrichment program, the North Koreans shocked Kelly by owning up to it. US officials quickly declared that the 1994 Agreed Framework—under which North Korea froze its plutonium-based reactor at Yongbyon in exchange for promises of a pair of light-water reactors and US diplomatic and economic relations—was dead. But US officials left out a critical piece of information about the confrontation in Pyongyang. According to most accounts, the North Koreans told Kelly they

Tim Shorrock is a Washington-based journalist who grew up in Seoul and Tokyo and has been writing about US-Korea relations for more than twenty years. He can be reached at tshorrock51@hotmail.com.

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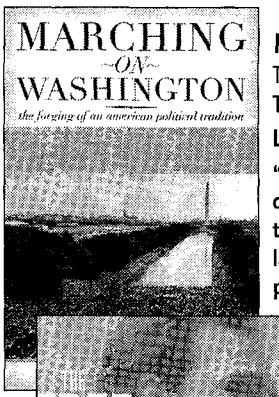
were willing to end their effort to enrich uranium, abide by existing safeguards on plutonium-based weapons and accept new inspections in return for a US pledge not to launch a pre-emptive attack, sign a peace agreement and normalize relations. Bush refused, saying the North must stop its program first; when that didn't happen, he cut off shipments of fuel oil promised under the 1994 agreement. Within weeks, Kim had restarted Yongbyon and kicked out UN weapons inspectors, who have been monitoring the reactor since 1994. "If the United States legally assures us of security by concluding a nonaggression treaty, the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula will be settled," Pyongyang's ambassador to China reiterated January 3.

That's essentially the trade-off that Seoul's new leader has embraced. But US statements that it "will not provide quid pro quos" could complicate a settlement. Since taking office, the Administration has been deeply split about North Korea and contemptuous of the Clinton Administration's attempts to defuse tensions (they included negotiations that would have ended North Korea's production of ballistic missiles, such as the ones it shipped to Yemen last month). Even when Bush has embraced the concept of negotiations, he has made unilateral demands that killed hopes of movement. When Secretary of State Colin Powell offered to begin open-ended talks last June, the White House demanded upfront a pullback of North Korean forces from the DMZ and new weapons inspections. The United States "treated North Korea like a defendant at the bar rather than a protagonist in a negotiation," says Selig Harrison, a Korea analyst at the Center for International Policy who has visited Pyongyang seven times. Powell's recent attempts to place the onus for a settlement on China and Russia, who genuinely seek a nonnuclear Korea, have ignored equally strong pleas from Presidents Jiang Zemin and Vladimir Putin for US engagement with Pyongyang and an end to US threats and sanctions.

Korea watchers have been warning for years that the US failure to meet its 1994 commitments has buttressed hard-liners in Pyongyang who believe nuclear deterrence is their only hope for survival. Soon after the framework was signed, Republicans took over the House of Representatives and began attacking Clinton's agreement as a sellout. As a result, Clinton delayed key elements of the pact—including construction of the reactors at the heart of the agreement—until the North-South summit in 2000 gave him political cover to proceed. Other provisions, such as the US promise to lift economic sanctions, were never implemented. Pakistan offered North Korea the technology for uranium enrichment sometime around 1999. With the framework unwinding and North Korea's security still in question, Harrison believes that Pyongyang took the offer as "a good hedging strategy."

Can the situation in Korea be resolved? By directly addressing North Korea's concerns about its survival, the Bush Administration has an opportunity to negotiate a new relationship with both Koreas that could finally transform the armistice that ended the Korean War fifty years ago into a lasting peace. The first step would be a joint declaration of nonaggression combined with a US pledge not to obstruct North Korea's economic development; in return, the North would agree to a verifiable halt to its nuclear program and welcome back the UN inspectors. Next would come orchestrated steps, such as

Radical Perspectives



MARCHING ON WASHINGTON
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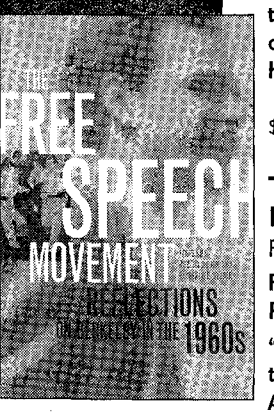

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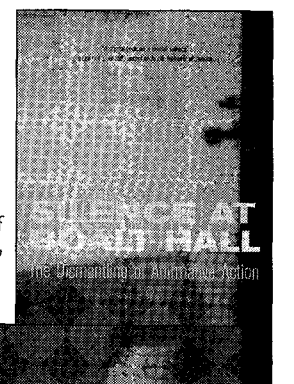

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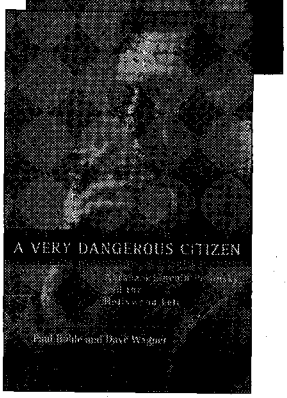

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mutual pullbacks from the DMZ, designed to create the peace that will allow both Koreas to move ahead on their long-delayed unification.

A growing number of Americans are pushing for a policy change. Harrison's book *Korean Endgame* lays out a comprehensive path for a settlement that would include US support for economic projects such as a railroad linking Korea with Europe and a pipeline connecting the oilfields on Russia's Pacific Coast to the two Koreas. Donald Gregg, the former national security adviser to George H.W. Bush, has courageously spoken out in favor of US engagement and visited Pyongyang several times to meet with senior officials. Nongovernmental organizations like the American Friends Service Committee and Nautilus Institute in Berkeley have forged institutional relationships in North Korea that could lay the foundation for future ties. It's unlikely Bush would have shifted ground without pressure from key senators, including Carl Levin, Richard Lugar and Joseph Biden.

Moving away from fifty years of confrontation means accepting North Korea as a legitimate nation, rejecting accusations that negotiations with Kim Jong Il are tantamount to appeasement and rethinking the idea that US troops must remain in Korea forever. It also means jettisoning the cold war thinking that, in many American minds, views South Koreans as junior partners ("It's like teaching a child how to ride a bike," a Pentagon official said about US relations with Seoul) and sees North Koreans as an inherently nasty and brutish people incapable of keeping agreements or joining the global community.

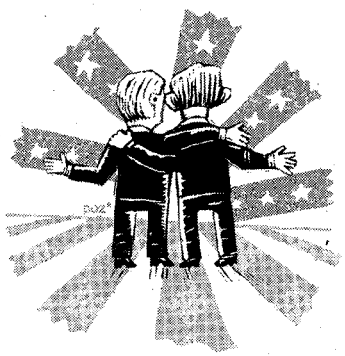
But building a constituency for peace in Korea requires pressure and action from a left that, since the end of the Vietnam War, has largely ceded Asia policy to conservative Republicans and the business community. For much of the past twenty years, as South Korea became a democracy and the collapse of the Soviet Union melted a half-century of regional animosity, many progressives have viewed East Asia as an economic competitor rather than a region whose complex political and economic problems are rooted in the cold war. Some critics of corporate globalization have joined with the far right in demonizing China, which is playing a key role in building peace in Korea and, like North Korea, is surrounded by US military bases. If progressives are to help Korea meet its goal of peaceful unification, they need to recognize the realities of contemporary Asia, reach out to the South Koreans and Okinawans who are sick of losing their daughters and their environment to US bases, and learn from their Asian counterparts about living with people they once loathed. If the Koreans can do it, so can we. ■

MINNESOTA'S NEW SENATOR, NORM COLEMAN, IS A DEALMAKER WITH AMBITIONS.

He's No Wellstone

DAVID RUBENSTEIN

This is the first in a periodic series on Republican members of the 108th Congress and officials who play important roles in the Bush Administration. —The Editors



PETER O. ZIERLEIN

Two weeks after being elected to the US Senate, Norm Coleman is standing before the Minnesota Agri-Growth Council doing what he does best, talking "folks" out of one side of his mouth and stroking the corporate wish list out of the other. The Agri-Growth Council includes the biggest players in Minnesota agribusiness, familiar names like Land O'Lakes, Hormel Foods and Cargill, the largest privately held corporation in the world, the nation's second-largest beef packer and one of Coleman's biggest campaign contributors.

"The folks who live off the land are the original conservationists," he says, in what is billed as his first postelection policy speech. The nod to the yeoman farmer is a segue into a theme a lot closer to the heart and pocketbook of most of the assembled than living off the land. "I will be a passionate advocate," he says, "to make sure that regulation is based on sound science."

Norm Coleman, the voters' choice to replace the late Paul Wellstone, is the man of many faces who launched his political career as a bullhorn-wielding protester and student government leader at Hofstra University and has been moving to the right ever since. Handpicked by the Bush Administration to run against Wellstone, he is likely to be a dependable Bush ally where it counts most: on regressive tax cuts; war and money for national defense; "privatization," whether the context is Social Security or getting rid of unionized government employees; and on issues related to energy, the environment and regulation. He is also likely, with great fanfare, to part ways with the Administration on occasional specifics, like drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. His position on ANWR was elusive during the Senate campaign, but seemed to settle on "Not now, maybe later."

Democrats in Minnesota have learned the hard way: It's a mistake to underestimate this man's ambition or his proficiency at political calculation. On social issues, Coleman has aligned himself with the most conservative wing of the Republican Party. Democrats had hoped that would create some difficulties for him during the campaign: How could he get votes from prochoice suburban Republican women without alienating the religious right that he'd been nurturing for most of the past decade? But Coleman is not a man easily squeezed by such dilemmas, as he ably demonstrated during a late-summer candidate debate with

David Rubenstein is a writer in Minneapolis.

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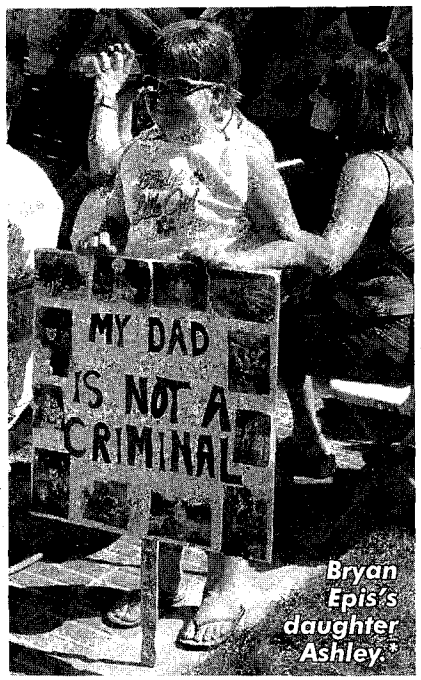
Will You Help Ashley and Her Dad?

Federal prosecutors won't permit court testimony concerning why marijuana was used, even though marijuana is permitted as medicine under the laws of California and eight other states.

And because juries have no way of knowing otherwise, Federal prosecutors accuse patients and good Samaritans of being "Drug King Pins."



Bryan Epis's daughter Ashley.*

How can judges and jurors dispense "justice and mercy" without relevant information?

According to a TIME / CNN poll, 80% of Americans approve of medical marijuana.

Please urge Attorney General Ashcroft to permit the presentation of all of the evidence. And ask your congressman and senators to pass a law preventing future concealment.

Will You Act?

* Bryan Epis was sentenced to ten years. The story the jury did not hear: In 1983, while in high school, Bryan was a passenger in a car that hit a telephone pole. The car decelerated from 35 mph to 0 in 20 milliseconds. Bryan had lacerations all over his body, 15 inches of lacerations in his skull, his sternum was fractured and two ribs were broken. The T2 and T3 vertebrae suffered compression fractures. The surgery just to stitch his head together lasted 2½ hours. He was in a coma for two days, and intensive care for three days. The surgeon said he was lucky not to be a vegetable or dead. Bryan began two years of physical therapy. He was told that the compression fractures would never heal, and they haven't. He suffers from chronic pain. He was prescribed heavy narcotic and narcotic derivative drugs, codeine and Vicodin for the pain. In 1983, his orthopedic surgeon recommended marijuana as a drug that could relieve pain better than the narcotics. Bryan used cannabis from 1983 to 1997. Using marijuana in combination with exercise, he reduced the pain level from level 10 to level 1. While using cannabis in his treatment, he finished high school; finished the grueling program for a Bachelor of Science degree in Electrical Engineering from California State University at Chico in May 1991 (only 1 in 5 who enter the program graduate); and finished law school at California Northern School of Law in May 1998. Bryan's explanation for growing the marijuana was that he needed it to alleviate his pain and to help other seriously ill patients.

Kevin B. Zeese, President, Common Sense for Drug Policy
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Wellstone at the Minnesota State Fair. Nor is he averse to wielding his own private third rail on the abortion issue, despite the unfathomable grief that must lie behind it. Wellstone at one point noted that Coleman prided himself on his ability to get things done and asked him what he intended to do about the abortion issue if he got elected. Coleman replied, as he did later to great effect when the topic came up during his debate with Walter Mondale, that he had lost two young children as the result of a genetic disease, and his opposition to abortion was a deeply held personal belief. But, he added, belief should be separated from what he would do as senator.

Wellstone forged ahead. "My question was, Norm, not about your deep personal beliefs. You signed a voter guide last week in which you said you support the complete and immediate reversal of *Roe v. Wade*. I wanted to ask you how as a senator you intend to do that. You didn't answer that question." He never did answer it. But it's hard to imagine a Bush Supreme Court Justice nominee whom Coleman would not support.

Coleman originally came to Minnesota after law school at the University of Iowa. He worked in the Attorney General's office for seventeen years, becoming chief prosecutor and solicitor general under Attorney General Skip Humphrey, liberal Democrat and son of the former US senator and Vice President. In 1993 Coleman was elected mayor of St. Paul, as a Democrat, but he became increasingly conservative while in office. He alienated unions with a failed attempt to privatize city services, and he bucked tradition by refusing to issue a mayoral proclamation endorsing a gay pride month. (He would argue that he's against discrimination as well as proclamations regarding sexuality, and he indeed could point to his own transgendered deputy mayor.) He was definitely antichoice. But he co-chaired Clinton's reelection campaign and in 1996 gave a rousing endorsement of both Paul Wellstone and Bill Clinton at the Democratic Farmer-Labor Party (DFL) convention.

A few months later, claiming the Democratic Party had left him and not the other way around, he switched parties and was re-elected mayor as a Republican. His smile, recently perfected with braces, seemed to be everywhere. He took time off to run an unsuccessful campaign for governor against his former boss, Skip Humphrey, and Jesse Ventura, and then returned to the mayor's desk. In 2001 he was enlisted by the Bush Administration to take on Wellstone, and in May of that year stood at George Bush's side in St. Paul when the President announced his energy policy.

With the campaign heating up, he went on the payroll of the Twin Cities law firm Winthrop & Weinstine, the major lobbying firm in Minnesota for the chemical and energy industries. His law license had expired, but he said in a statement that he would be working on "new business development." When the question of compensation was raised by reporters, he replied with perfect Coleman pitch: that was between himself, his law firm and his wife. Later, after being badgered by the Wellstone campaign and the media, he said it "amounted to" $140,000 a year. Winthrop & Weinstine lobbying clients include the American Chemistry Council (formerly the Chemical Manufacturers Association), the Chlorine Chemistry Council, the meat industry giant Farmland Industries and several energy corporations, including Flint Hills Resources LP (formerly Koch Petroleum Group) and Manitoba Hydro. Enron was a client until the company's demise.

Coleman based his Senate campaign on his record as mayor, highlighted by the claim that he created 18,000 jobs. The DFL never effectively countered the claim, although Wellstone pointed out that in the Clinton boom years jobs were being created everywhere. Late in the campaign a Twin Cities weekly, *City Pages*, reported that job creation on a per capita basis in neighboring Minneapolis had actually exceeded St. Paul's during the period in question, and that job creation outside the major metropolitan areas had exceeded it by a large margin. But local mainstream media gave Coleman a pass on the issue, and the national media followed suit. His "revitalization" of St. Paul became part of his thumbnail identifier for everyone from the Fox network to National Public Radio.

What Coleman did do during his tenure was make a number of deals that gave public subsidies to private interests, thereby building a mini-version of the kind of spoils system the Bush Administration is putting together at the federal level. Private contractors who benefited from Coleman's "public-private partnerships" repaid the favor with generous contributions to his Senate campaign. St. Paul is now reeling economically, like many US cities, but by many accounts its position is notably worse than it would have been without the debt legacy left by Coleman's economic development strategy.

During his Agri-Growth speech, the immediate context of Coleman's embrace of "sound science" was the livestock industry. The subtext was the contentious issue of industrial livestock operations and their economic and environmental consequences, among them manure pits, sometimes larger than football fields and containing millions of gallons of raw manure. In Minnesota, neighbors of these "lagoons" have had to struggle with state pollution control authorities and industry over whether the pervasive stink in which they live and breathe constitutes a violation of any measurable standard.

It's telling that among the issues championed by Wellstone was a de facto restriction on these operations. A provision that Wellstone helped introduce into the Senate version of the recent farm bill would have barred big meatpackers from owning livestock. To the surprise of many, it passed. Then it ran into Republican Representative Larry Combest, chair of the House Agriculture Committee and probably the most dependable supporter of Big Meat in all of Congress. In conference, he managed to strip the meatpacker amendment, as well as reforms that would have put less farm aid in the pockets of big commodity farmers and corporations. As this article went to press, Combest's assistant counsel on the ag committee was reportedly under consideration for a staff position with Coleman, who will be seated on the Senate Agriculture Committee.

Coleman's office declined to provide comment on his view regarding meatpackers being able to own and raise livestock—a virtually certain recipe for the perpetuation of monoculture animal husbandry at its worst. But people who live in rural areas surrounding the manure pits know what residents of towns like Elizabeth, New Jersey, and Gary, Indiana, have known for years. When a Republican corporate shill starts talking about "sound science," be prepared to hold your nose. ■

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LETTERS
CONTINUED

(Continued From Page 2)
written by Ignacio Chapela, a microbial biologist, and his graduate student, David Quist, at UC, Berkeley. They made two assertions: first, that through DNA analyses they had discovered transgenes in the indigenous corn plants of southern Mexico; and, second, that the transgenic material itself was unstable within the genome, potentially leading to an array of unknown synergistic effects within the impacted, or contaminated, plants.

The article provoked a considerable controversy within the scientific community, mostly focused on methodology, and on the second assertion, that the transgenes are unstable. After rising pressure, including criticism from both public and industry-funded scientists—and brought to the public's attention through an industry-sponsored Internet campaign to discredit Chapela and Quist—*Nature* did disassociate itself from the findings of their paper. However, the primary assertion—that transgenes had made their way to Mexico—is no longer in dispute, as it has been widely accepted as correct even by Chapela's critics, several of whom I interviewed, and confirmed in a study conducted by the Mexican government's Institute of Environment. What remains in dispute is how unstable those genes are within the genome—a matter to which I did not refer in my article, because of space restraints.

For further details on the dispute over the *Nature* article, I refer readers to the website for PBS's *NOW With Bill Moyers*, which aired the television version of my story this past October (www.pbs.org/now/science/genenature.html).

MARK SCHAPIRO

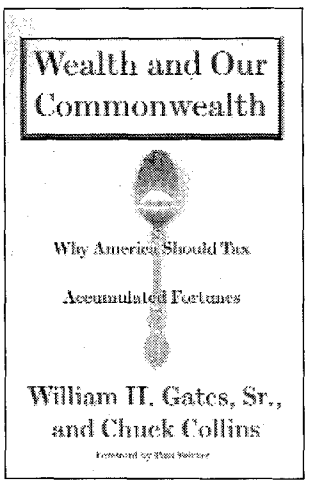
'SURPRISED AND DISAPPOINTED'

Jersey City, NJ

■ I am surprised and disappointed that you published the letter by Liz Hrenda in which she argues that Catholic political leaders oppose abortion mostly for unworthy reasons—ignorance, intimidation and fear ["Letters," Dec. 2]. That some might oppose abortion out of principle, because they see it as a moral evil, escapes her. Without offering evidence, she claims that Catholic schoolteachers give failing grades to the children of Catholic politicians who vote the wrong way in order to punish the parents. I have taught in Catholic high schools and universities since 1965 and have never heard of such a bizarre phenomenon. My colleagues and I have heard hundreds, thousands, of explanations of why junior flunked—from the dog who ate the homework to the remote family tragedy where grandmother's second husband drove their car off a cliff. For lots of reasons, some parents can't own up to the fact that their children don't study. A teacher who failed an otherwise high-scoring student merely to punish that student's political parent should and would be disciplined.

RAYMOND A. SCHROTH, SJ

"If you doubt whether there are any truly public-spirited Americans left, let me introduce Bill Gates Sr. and Chuck Collins."
—BARBARA EHRENREICH,
AUTHOR OF *NICKEL AND DIMED: ON (NOT) GETTING BY IN AMERICA*



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—Jimmy Carter, Winner of the 2002 Nobel Peace Prize

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Global Interfaith Peace Calls For Peace Brigade To Iraq; International Peace Rally in Baghdad

Communique No. 1 From the Director, Dr. Kaveh L. Afrasiabi:

In the Name of God, the Guardian of Peace in the World,

Global Interfaith Peace (GIP) is a new nongovernmental organization committed to the ideal of peaceful resolution of global conflicts. **GIP** calls on the world community to create a great chain of beings around Baghdad to shield millions of its innocent, long-suffering inhabitants from the looming confrontation. And we call for an international peace rally in Baghdad in early February 2003.

Earlier this year, a small buffer of peace activists around the Palestinian chairman Arafat prevented his destruction, which would have harmed the cause of Middle East peace indefinitely. **GIP** believes that war is not the answer and a Western military invasion of Iraq will likely yield a horrific toll on civilians as well as a serious setback in the fight against global terrorism. We advocate the use of nonviolent sanctions to ensure Iraq's compliance with the UN's order to disarm.

We are also concerned about the long-term impact of a war in Iraq on the United Nations—by distorting the UN's image as a smokescreen for global militarism and thus causing a new round of global chaos.

By placing themselves in harm's way in the interests of humanity, the interfaith peace activists will likely prove a deterrent and the degree of their effectiveness can only be proven on the ground. Building on a rich global tradition that includes such names as Martin Luther King and Gandhi, the **GIP** strongly believes that the crisis in Iraq is also a crisis of opportunity for the world's religions to play a direct role in concert toward the lofty objective of peaceful resolution of this crisis. We call this **The King-Gandhi Peace Brigade**. Please join our rally in Washington, DC, on the King's Day.

For more information, please contact the **GIP** at:
Global Interfaith Peace
PO Box 456
Newton, MA 02459
Telephone/Fax: (617) 964-0659 E-mail: globalinterfaithpeace2003@yahoo.com

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COMMENT

(Continued From Page 7)

ties—a kinship ignored in the year-end controversy over whether the senator from Mississippi is a segregationist. Sure, segregation (*aka* "states' rights") was the centerpiece of the Dixiecrats' platform. But the exploitation of race has never been an end in itself. Then and now, it is an emotional means to a pragmatic political and economic goal: The key objective shared by Republicans and Dixiecrats is a government that's a passive referee overseeing a status quo of unfettered free enterprise rather than a dynamic agent of social progress.

Many seem to have been under the impression that the 1948 Dixiecrat revolt—the Southern bolt from the Democratic Party in protest of Harry Truman's civil rights plank—was some spontaneous redneck uprising of rebel-yelling snuff-dippers. Actually, it was quite the opposite, a power play carefully orchestrated by the corporate mandarins of the region (or their lawyers), many of whom answered to parent companies in the North. The racial demagogy they used to achieve the secession was a tried-and-true ploy of those so-called better classes, usually trotted out when the not-so-good classes (poor whites and blacks) were forming an alliance across the color line that threatened the oligarchy of planters and industrialists who had historically ruled the South. This particular white-supremacist tantrum had been brewing since Franklin Roosevelt created the Committee on Fair Employment Practice in 1941, seeking to end race discrimination in wartime defense industries. Truman was proposing to make the FEPC a permanent agency.

The most persistent of the pesky biracial movements bucking the established order was organized labor. Southern bosses had long used racist propaganda and vigilantes to foment strife between black and white workers, with the goal of keeping the unions weak and wages depressed. The aim of those powerful business interests was to roll back the New Deal. Roosevelt had posed many challenges to corporate omnipotence, and the boldest of them was Section 7(a) of the 1933 National Industrial Recovery Act, which guaranteed workers the right to organize and bargain collectively. The same representatives of organized money who spearheaded the vicious campaign against Roosevelt became the brain trust of the Dixiecrat Party. That in turn morphed into the segregationist resistance of the civil rights era and is now the Republican Party of what was once the Solid (Democratic) South.

What the racist Southern gentlemen of old and the modern-day Republicans have both cannily appreciated is that poor people do not like to consider themselves poor. Low-income whites would rather identify with the rich folks than with their own class, especially if their partners in poverty happen to be black. That helps explain why, in clinging to its nostalgia for the underdog ("special interests" to the *über*dogs), the pre-Clinton Democratic Party lost much of its base—the Reagan Democrats—to the rival party. The now Solid Republican South is a tribute to the cleverness of the haves at getting the have-nots to work against their own interests: The main attraction the Republicans hold for the "regular people" who make up the bulk of their Southern constituency is that they are the party of the white man.

Trent Lott is a textbook example of the hard-up soul who ended up as a diehard champion of the system in which he had suffered. His father was a sharecropper who graduated to the industrial grind as a pipe fitter for Ingalls Shipbuilding in Pascagoula, Mississippi. Ingalls was owned by a reactionary industrialist from Birmingham, the birthplace of the Dixiecrat Party that begat Lott's Republican Party in the South. The offensive rhetoric of the earlier era may have softened into code words like "Southern heritage," "fiscal conservatism" and "strict constructionism" (that last is for Chief Justice Rehnquist, who opposed *Brown v. Board of Education* as a Supreme Court law clerk in 1952). The mission remains consistent: to undo the damage of the New Deal and make democracy safe for business, discouraging labor unions, taxes, personal-injury lawsuits and environmentalism.

The dark-skinned minority that animates the current Republican agenda tends to have roots in the Middle East rather than Africa, but the policies being advanced in the name of the war on terrorism are the predictable docket of union-beating and corporation-coddling. The sticking point that held up the Homeland Security Act was the Bush Administration's attempt to use it as a pretext to strip 170,000 federal employees of union representation. Even under the compromise that passed in November, the President has the power to effectively annul the union in the name of "national security"—quite a salute to all those government employees who charged into the Twin Towers without consulting their shop stewards. Georgia Democrat Max Cleland (a triple-amputee Vietnam veteran) lost his Senate seat on Election Day after being called "unpatriotic" for defending the federal employees' collective-bargaining rights.

Meanwhile, another successful provision of the Homeland Security Act protects the right of corporations to be awarded federal contracts even if they establish headquarters offshore in order to avoid paying federal taxes. And then there was the most stunning, anonymous amendment to the bill, that surgical bit of tort reform that *New York Times* columnist Bill Keller posits was the handiwork of Lott's replacement as Senate majority leader, Bill Frist, MD: the shielding of pharmaceutical companies from lawsuits claiming that mercury in their vaccines caused autism in children.

Compared with that, Lott's sin is refreshingly symbolic: It really doesn't matter whether he's a card-carrying segregationist; Jim Crow ain't coming back. But that doesn't mean that his peer group has given up its special privileges. Clearly, when Lott indulged himself at the Thurmond birthday party, he thought he was speaking freely, among his "own kind." Even though he has been banished to the outer darkness of a powerful committee chairmanship, the "free speech" he abused is still a cherished prerogative of rich white men. Vice President Cheney has outdone himself to guard the privacy of the conversations he had with his friends in the energy industry. And the CEOs at Augusta National have no intention of opening up their golf club to women. It's hard for old boys to be old boys when there are girls around. Or blacks. Or poor people. Or autistic children.

DIANE MCWHORTER

Diane McWhorter's book about her hometown, Birmingham, Alabama, Carry Me Home *(Simon & Schuster), won the 2002 Pulitzer Prize for general nonfiction.*

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

The Fix at Ground Zero

PHILIP NOBEL

The second year of machinations at the World Trade Center site has gotten off to a vigorous start. Digging out of the public-relations hole it created for itself last summer with the release of six profoundly uninspired plans by four handpicked local firms, in September the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation (LMDC) announced the selection of six mostly glamorous design teams from among "406 submissions received from every continent except Antarctica." Another, a handpicked local holdover from round one, was immediately added *hors concours*. The seven teams—six empowered by a jury and one by bureaucratic fiat—were then charged with creating "innovative designs" out of the appallingly complex skein of planning dilemmas at Ground Zero—What to build? Where to remember? How to profit?—and they were asked to do so using nearly the same overstuffed, lease-mandated quotas that had stymied the designers in the previous attempt: up to 10 million square feet of office space (graciously reduced from 11 million), up to 1 million square feet for an "international conference center and hotel" (an item found on no "Listening to the City" wish list) and between 600,000 and 1 million square feet of "respectful" retail space (quietly and substantially increased from last summer's totals). And, as before, all of this bounty is to be packed into a hemmed-in and hollowed-out urban site of only sixteen acres, two of which, the tower footprints, are now by official decree hallowed ground.

A working program reflecting these enduring assumptions—plus a memorial, a memorial museum, "a 21st century train station," a "distinctive skyline," a "new street grid," a "grand promenade" on West Street—was released on October 11 by the LMDC. Then the process went into chambers, where by all accounts that agency kept close tabs on the developing visions; but the Port Authority—still, alas, the owner of the site—emerged as the primary client, the party to impress. As planned, the elections came and went with progress implied; no incumbent was dogged by charges of inaction or exposed to "vision thing" risk. But in the weeks after, the papers began to fill with a steady pulse of official and leaked enthusiasms intended to raise hopes that an inventive spatial solution was near. At last, we were told, the cavalry—"great minds"—had come.

On December 18 the public was treated to an event that was an apt finale to that hype. As morning broke over lower Manhattan one year, three months and one week after it was attacked, the skylit, marble-veneered, palm-tree-canopied volume of the resurrected World Financial Center Winter Garden rang with the din of an assembling media scrum. In front of a well-guarded stage, behind a barrier of retractable ticket-line ribbons, a phalanx of miniature heroic futures waited, each world's-tallest totem of renewal suggesting its potency by the size of the tented peak it pushed up in a cloaking white sheet. Every vantage on those proud models not obstructed by the restored grove was taken up by rows of VIP folding chairs and banks of network cameras. Reporters eddied around the margins and complained that there was no coffee. This is how the city heals.

Before us are nine visions, two promising in part, six undercooked, one a perfect paean to the status quo—a developer's delight.

At 10 AM sharp, in what may stand forever as the high-water mark of architecture's popular presence in American culture, the unveilings began, covered live on cable and local public radio, where a prominent design critic was asked to provide color commentary as if it were the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. First came Daniel Libeskind, brilliant and endearingly impish, unspooling a riff so affecting that few then or since questioned the shattered crystal city he proposed, ornamented with captured cosmic rays and puzzle-locked Tetris chits. Below a needle spire stacked with gardens (an "affirmation of life"), a "museum of the event"

Philip Nobel writes for Metropolis, Artforum, *the* New York Times *and* Architectural Digest. *He is trained as an architect.*

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would hang provocatively over the concrete walls and bedrock floor of the World Trade Center's deep "bathtub" foundation. Resisting the convenient, circumscribed sanctity of the tower footprints, Libeskind left that entire relic raw. Norman Foster followed with something for everyone: a welcome humanist pitch ("Architecture is about needs: the needs of people"), a nuanced but normative memorial park around very empty footprints, and "twinned" glass towers "which kiss and touch and become one." The green engineering of those towers, their appeal to the build-'em-as-they-were crowd, the canny proposal to create private mourning zones for the victims' families and the comfortable feasibility of the whole added up to a rhetorical grand slam.

Lord Foster was a hard act to follow. Perhaps that's why Richard Meier kicked off his team's presentation with shtick: "We're the New York team. Some say we're the Dream Team. But that's not true. We're very real. And we're presenting a project that we'd like to think is also very real." That qualification told the whole story. The work Meier produced with three New York–scene rivals—Peter Eisenman, Steven Holl and Charles Gwathmey—bordered on the embarrassing: five inscrutable towers (each topping out at a cute 1,111 feet) tied by fat skyways into an imposing waffle that rears over twelve acres of windswept déjà vu. Though they got a pass from most design critics—Herbert Muschamp of the *New York Times* actually published his first defense before the plan was released—a studio critic would have to give the Dream Team an incomplete. The poverty of the design, a blank onto which any idea could be projected, gave heft to the murmurs that this ballyhooed collaboration had not gone smoothly. THINK, another bizarre star-cluster, brought together (among others) David Rockwell, the master of themed good-times architecture; Shigeru Ban, a genuine prophet of an ethical, bare-bones alternative; and Frederic Schwartz, whose career in the trenches was interrupted last year when his idea for decking West Street caught fire. This busy coalition covered its bets with three schemes: "World Cultural Center," twin latticework towers hung with vertiginous memorial platforms and vague not-for-profit spaces in playful blobs; "Sky Park," a plan for three towers looking down on the namesake plateau; and "Great Hall," which imagined a site-spanning thirty-story-high glass room that, despite the liberal use of the word "quiet" in architect Raphael Vinoly's presentation, looked like nothing less than a louder, loftier version of the press-choked Winter Garden itself. A third supergroup, United Architects, included jet-set mavericks from London (Foreign Office Architects), Los Angeles (Greg Lynn FORM) and Amsterdam (Ben van Berkel and Caroline Bos of UN Studio, slumming here with their less accomplished contemporaries). Using presentation materials developed with the design and branding firm Imaginary Forces (the wizards behind the *Harry Potter* title sequences), Lynn sold his team as next-generation utopians. But beyond the hip bits and bytes, the team's cranky wall of canted, conjoined, triangle-faceted towers—though full of insurgent pluck—was a commonplace of New York futures past: a street-spanning megastructure, a "City in the Sky." Clearly it's time for a fresh take on the new.

The insiders presented last. Peterson/Littenberg, the firm that skirted the jury via a consulting contract with the LMDC, was the furthest from the stylistic and urbanistic mean. Where others sought to bring life across the highway to Battery Park City, that still-sterile annex to Manhattan's Lower West Side, these urban designers in the reactionary mode sought to impose an identical impotence on Ground Zero: awkward towers jammed into a cut-rate Rockefeller Center, walled gardens and cozy pocket parks, the familiar easy streets of ersatz urbanism. This plan would create a wonderful beginner's pedestrian district for any American city that needs one, but New Yorkers expect much more from a street than what Peterson/Littenberg seem prepared to give. Apart from the self-defeating New York Four, it was the weakest of the "innovative designs" and, because of what it revealed of official taste, the most ominous. At the very end came venerable Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, forged in World War II as the house designers of the military-industrial complex. They are all over Ground Zero and have been from day one. David Childs, head of the New York office, is architect to the World Trade Center's commercial leaseholder, Larry Silverstein, and the designer of Silverstein's rapidly reborn and relentlessly anodyne Seven World Trade Center tower. Marilyn Jordan Taylor, long an articulate voice in the city's public-space debate, was active in the formation of New York New Visions, the design-world pressure group. In front of the cameras that day, a third partner, Roger Duffy, proposed a phased array of nimble, crooked towers, replacing the public-ground plane acre for acre with limited-access plazas in the sky. He took only six of the twenty minutes allotted to present a rather complex and radical idea. Does he know he shouldn't be wasting his time with hothouse flowers? Should we?

Will New Yorkers take to the streets for architecture? If not, we should be steeled for sixteen acres of prime river-view disappointment.

A Ground-Zero-Sum Game

As this spectacle played out in the Winter Garden's center ring, office workers—many likely survivors of the generative event—looked on. They stood above at the mezzanine rails or sat on the grand stair that was built to take traffic from the pedestrian bridge, now scrap, that served so well as an escape route before it was taken out by the towers' collapse. Several of the hopeful teams had hired public relations firms to increase their real-time traction in the public imagination. So under the witnesses' mordant gaze, those inevitable lubricants of contemporary enterprise, smiling flacks, did their thing. Some of them—inexplicably—were telling all who would listen, "Our team should win."

Win? As things stand, there will be no winner in the rebuilding game, not one worth rooting for, anyway; a compromised process can only result in compromise. And there could have been no winner that day: This was bread and circus for the chattering class, smoke and mirrors for the viewers back home, a feint by the development powers to protect their left flank from accusations of philistinism, a dodge to buy time while they get their publicly financed house in order for a final push at that fearsome *fait accompli*: rebuilding on the World Trade Center site every last leasable square foot that the market will bear and society will tolerate. Before us now are nine visions, two of which hold promise in their parts, six of which are undercooked *esquisses* (little different from the ongoing fancies of amateurs) and one of which—the ringers' plan—offers a pitch-perfect paean to the status quo, a developers' delight. There's a lot to discuss, sure. But remember two things: (1) For architects, presentation technologies are a mask and a crutch; the right software, well handled, can make any idea look like a winner. (2) There can be no winner without something to win.

The beguiling images that were released on December 18 were not the products of a design competition. That fact was made clear in bold text on the very first page of the Request for Qualifications brief posted last August by the LMDC— "This is NOT a design competition and will not result in

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the selection of a final plan"—and it was repeated quite plainly several times in published addenda to that document: "This is not a design competition. It is a design study." The distinction is significant. The LMDC has bound itself only to search for "innovative designs" that will be presented "to the public to promote a free-flowing exchange of ideas." That promise has been kept. Had this been an actual design competition, there would now be a reasonable expectation that a winner would be picked and a commission granted. Here again the August RFQ is eloquent: "At the conclusion of this process, the LMDC may choose to retain one or more of the participants to continue, or choose to retain none of them. Such election will be made at the discretion of the LMDC."

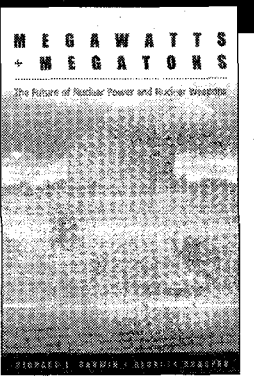
That last passage still stands as the clearest written indication of next steps. But more was betrayed in comments made by John Whitehead, the internally embattled chairman of the LMDC, as he closed down the Winter Garden event. He thanked the architects for their many plans, which, he said, his agency would now have the task of reducing to one. The architects have fattened themselves for the cannibals' feast; by the end of January the LMDC intends to digest their studies, by means unspecified, into a single master plan. By February, too, the Port Authority is scheduled to reveal another transparent-process wild card: its own in-house land-use vision, being drawn up now by Stan Eckstut, one of the original designers of Battery Park City. We'll soon see how those plans might mesh. Right now it's a state secret.

But let's not dwell on the negative. That one bright December day at the World Financial Center belonged to "the visionaries." So said Roland Betts, developer, chairman of the LMDC's Joint Site Planning Committee, friend of George W. Bush and arguably the most powerful unelected official at the table. It was a generous sentiment, and it was true; after the *Times* editorial board deemed the designs "a gift" ("The government's obligation...is to protect the scale and ambition of these plans against what are almost certain to be challenges from commercial and political interests"), after the online polls were closed at the *New York Post* and CNN (Foster's "kissing" towers won both), after the submissions were put into vitrines at the Winter Garden for public review (all day, every day through February 2), this news cycle was immediately swallowed up by the annual slide into styling an American Christmas just like the ones we used to know. Whether by chance or tactic, that snowbound intermission took two weeks out of what was only a six-week window for the LMDC to assess its harvest of ideas, gather and weigh public comment (from the exhibition, online and at a public meeting scheduled for January 13), stitch together a successor scheme and somehow stretch that exquisite corpse around the unknown angles of the Port Authority's "Plan X." What does haste make? Here, a wealth of rumors that the fix is in.

Which is not to say the design study changed nothing. It has tilted the scales ever so slightly in favor of architectural quality—insofar as quality is synonymous with the products of architecture's star system, deployed in the time-honored New York way: a signature skin job. After the big Winter Garden debut, it is unlikely that the LMDC or the Port Authority or Larry Silverstein can backtrack from the assumption that at least one marquee name will now be attached to the project. That has caused some observers, notably the *Times*'s star-struck Muschamp, to dance little victory jigs in print. But it should offer only small comfort to lovers of the art and to all still hoping for *difference* at Ground Zero. Those who control the program and the publicity and the calendar and the money and the land and the sky above it can hardly be said to have bent much if they contract out for aesthetics. And—barring a lightning strike—that is where we're heading, even if we open the papers one morning in the coming weeks or years to find that the powers downtown have hired the irresistible Lord Foster or the intense Daniel Libeskind or even the shining Frank Gehry, the last of the greats untarnished by participation in the process itself. (Gehry turned down an invitation to join the ill-fated Dream Team. He's playing a longer game.) So save your hosannas. This is still business as usual, remember, even if writ large and strangely burdened. The odds-on future of the site remains a queasy trains-below, cubicles-above, memorial-in-the-footprints, shopping-everywhere dollop of old-normal Manhattan. And as in any other local real estate venture, the architect will be brought in to dress the developers' numbers. No one should be surprised; that is the bone that is always thrown, and this time we saw the windup broadcast live on TV.

Will New Yorkers take to the streets for architecture? If so, the time is now. Either the brakes are put on hard—an exotic policy prevails (like Mayor Bloomberg's pending offer to swap city-owned land under the airports for the Port Authority's fiefdom downtown); an open, binding, juried competition like the one planned for the memorial is promised for the whole site; the bottom truly falls out of the economy and the problems wait for bolder times—or we

LOOKING FORWARD



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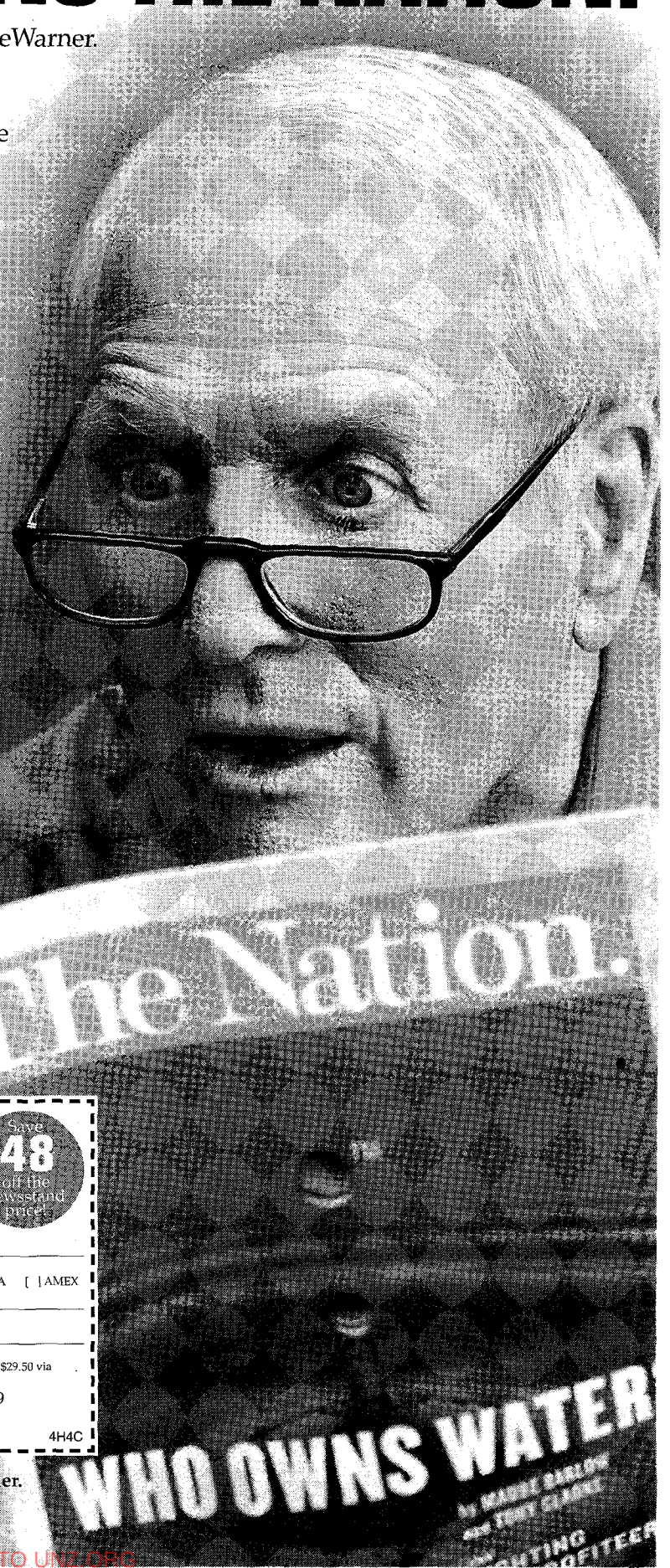

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should steel ourselves for sixteen acres of prime river-view disappointment. The tragically emptied World Trade Center pit began its afterlife as an arena for exaggerated quarrels; it has become a crucible of the absurd. The great glory and weakness of architecture is that it is forever tied to such mundane circumstance. Architecture is a contingent art. Whatever new thing we get at Ground Zero will embody the context of its creation: the halting, mendacious process unfolding before us in twilight. Which is why the shaken should look elsewhere for solace, why the broken should avert their eyes and why the lost should seek another, less worldly redemption. ■

Explaining 'The Magician'

PAUL REITTER

THOMAS MANN: Life as a Work of Art.
By Hermann Kurzke. Translated by Leslie Willson. Princeton. 581 pp. $35.

Art peels the kitsch off of life.—Robert Musil

Thomas Mann's popularity has been going the way of the Buddenbrooks family business. It is in decline. With many used editions of his books circulating, a drop in consumption would be hard to assess. But there are better indicators. After all, a shrinking readership does not always imply a decrease in stature. So consider instead what happened this past October, when *Die Zeit*, Germany's most prestigious cultural-political weekly, listed fifty authors whose works would constitute an ideal library for young students of German literature. Mann came in a humiliating forty-second. And in an unrestrained act of cruelty, *Die Zeit* put his older brother and frequent rival, Heinrich, one spot ahead of him. Could Mann's love of obscure references and epic sweep have prompted such hostile treatment? That seems unlikely. For you will find Friedrich Hölderlin and his recondite *Hyperion* in twenty-third place, with Hans Henny Jahnn's huge *Wood Ship* next in line.

Among the Nobel laureates, Mann finished last. Yet he had the greatest effect on the global imagination. His works have been translated into fifty-one languages. And of all the characters created by all the authors on *Die Zeit*'s list, only Goethe's Werther and Faust and Kafka's Gregor Samsa and Joseph K. are international icons of the same order as Mann's Gustav von Aschenbach and Hans Castorp. Furthermore, Mann himself developed into an international symbol. Through his BBC radio addresses, he quite literally became the voice of German antifascism during World War II. Forty-second place for the writer who, upon fleeing Europe in 1938, arrogantly, defiantly and with some justification, dared to claim, "Wherever I am, Germany is"? Has "the Magician," as Mann's children called him, lost his magic touch?

Not if attention from biographers remains a measure of importance. Five major Mann biographies have appeared since 1995. And the astonishing efflorescence of interest does not end there. A big-budget, multi-installment film about Mann's life aired on German television two years ago. Meanwhile, Mann's publisher, the S. Fischer press, had just re-released—in an expanded edition—Peter de Mendelssohn's sprawling, flattering portrait of him, which it had first put out in 1975. Some of these projects are largely commemorative. Not by chance did Heinrich Breloer's film, a respectful documentary that mixes fictional re-enactments with interviews, have its premiere during an anniversary (*Buddenbrooks* turned 100 in 2001). But the new biographies have other impetuses and, for the most part, a different coloration.

By stipulating that his diaries should be published twenty years after his death, Mann has helped manage his posthumous career. The diaries often undermine the impression left by Mann's public persona. And so their staggered availability—the final volume appeared in 1995—guaranteed him decades of lively critical reception. Indeed, when the complete diaries became accessible, the serial biographers went to work, drawing heavily on this "new" source. Donald Prater's *Thomas Mann: A Life*; Ronald Hayman's *Thomas Mann: A Biography*; and Anthony Heilbut's *Thomas Mann: Eros and Literature* all get their main themes from it. Yet if Mann's diaristic trick kept an audience in their seats, it did not win him the applause he craved. In fact, the diaries seem to have damaged his reputation.

Prater's detailed book represents Mann as a domestic tyrant who sacrificed family life for art's sake. (Two of Mann's sons, Klaus and Michael, committed suicide; the third, Golo, openly disliked him. Mann's wife once referred to herself as an "appendage" of the artist.) Both Hayman and Heilbut try to debunk the myth that Mann was a proper bourgeois—the myth that Mann's starched appearance and the tenacity with which he clung to polite forms of address correspond to his innermost being. Citing the diaries, Hayman and Heilbut emphasize the extent of Mann's repressed homosexuality. They leave us with the sense that unfulfilled "man-to-man" desires, to use Mann's phrase, tortured and exhausted him, and that Mann bears affinities with his prematurely old, emotionally hapless creations, for example, Aschenbach. While admiring of Mann's art, Heilbut judges his life harshly, or as harshly as his breezy style allows: "On such occasions he [Mann] may have remembered a youth [i.e., the young Mann] who had foolishly declined to 'vent his feelings' and live his life."

The shift in Mann's fortunes has been more dramatic in Germany. During the postwar era, three of the most eminent leftist critics writing in German—Georg Lukács, Theodor Adorno and Hans Mayer—celebrated the progressive value of Mann's work, and not because of his opposition to fascism. Rather, they focused on his literature, on how, as a "critical realism," it engages with social problems, and on the implicit anti-authoritarian politics of Mann's omni-questioning irony. For a later generation of critics, one less concerned with the ideology of form, Mann's political statements have carried more weight. And there have been more of them to consider. Some are troubling, for the diaries register a certain ambivalence toward Hitler's rise and his Jewish victims. Hence, perhaps, *Die Zeit*'s unease about recommending Mann to students. Hence also the motivation for a large-scale reckoning with Mann's politics. This is what Klaus Harpprecht, a former speechwriter for Willy Brandt, delivers in his recent biographical effort. In a little over 2,000 pages, Harpprecht comes to the following conclusion: Mann was laudably active in American exile. He wrote more than 400 journalistic pieces, gave many speeches and served as a cultural adviser to the Roosevelt Administration. But all this came too late. At the really crucial moment, in the early 1930s, Mann said too little. He could

Paul Reitter teaches in the German department at Ohio State.

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have done much more to combat the Nazis, and he should have done much more. We should regard Mann accordingly—as a political failure.

Mann failed himself, Mann failed his family and, ultimately, Mann failed the world: Needless to say, these ideas have not exactly pleased Mann enthusiasts, some of whom have attempted to revise the revisionism. The best of the new Mann biographies, Hermann Kurzke's *Thomas Mann: Life as a Work of Art*, is written in this spirit. A longtime expert on Mann's work, Kurzke makes no secret of his commitments. He tells us: "To build a staunch structure of art as Thomas Mann does, to be loyal all his life to a single publisher and to a single wife, to sacrifice passion that would go beyond those limits, and to maintain this arrangement with tightly held stubbornness—it is cheap to brand that as suppression." As you would expect, Kurzke's indignation leads to problems. He wants to show readers "born later" how complicated Mann's context was and how complicated his responses to it were. Kurzke accomplishes this, but apologetics occasionally intrude noisily on his sensitive discussions. For example, in trying to solve what he labels "the question of all questions," or the "riddles" of Mann's nationalistic behavior during World War I, Kurzke tracks the various pressures that were bearing down on him. And he persuasively argues that rather than sheer blindness or brute opportunism, a matrix of factors, including familial tension—Heinrich was a famous pacifist—and Mann's troubled sexuality, was responsible for his jingoism and his doubts about the Weimar Republic. Yet Kurzke insists that Mann was merely playing "a role" when he articulated those feelings in *Reflections of a Nonpolitical Man*.

Similarly, Kurzke follows the twists and turns in Mann's answer to the "Jewish Question," while doing several peremptory about-faces along the way. He explains how Mann's Jewish in-laws could enjoy his story, "The Blood of the Walsungs," even as it was being condemned as an anti-Semitic parody of them. He also struggles to understand how, on April 20, 1933, Mann could confide to his diary, "the revolt against Jewish things might have my understanding to a certain extent," and still find the Nazis and their anti-Semitism repellent. But elsewhere Kurzke proclaims, "this cannot be debated—Thomas Mann regarded the Jews highly, more highly than he did the Germans." "This" *can* be debated, though. Kurzke himself debates it as well as anyone—until he attempts to read Mann's anti-Semitism as salutary self-criticism. "As the kernel of Thomas Mann's supposed anti-Semitism, there resides the fear of the threat to life by the intellect. His polemics are so bitter and unjust because he is fighting against himself, against his own better knowledge, because he is afraid for his own composure, form, and dignity."

In general, Kurzke's revisionist drive takes him far away from such defensive overstatements and toward a deep level of psychological understanding. Mann's critics pursue this goal too, of course. But Kurzke goes much further more creatively. The biographies I have mentioned here vary with respect to tone, style, size, rigor and thematic emphasis. Yet with a single exception, the analytic structure of each one would provide a suitable framework for chronicling the lives of many other authors.

In the spate of Mann biographies in recent years, only Kurzke's gives us penetrating new insights into what, for Mann, life was like.

Heilbut could examine how Kafka's sexual discomfort influenced his art. Harpprecht could write a biography that evaluates Goethe's politics. Only Kurzke's method works only with Thomas Mann. For Kurzke organizes his book around interpretive openings peculiar to his subject. And only Kurzke gives us penetrating new insights into Mann's lived experience, into what, for Mann, life was like.

Kurzke adapts form to content in several ways. Most obvious is his mode of storytelling, which approximates Mann's. Like Mann's narrators, Kurzke often shifts registers. He analyzes ("the essays about Verlaine, Kleist, Gide, and Platen are a kind of masquerade"); recounts ("at the time of his passion for the waiter Franz Westermeier, Thomas Mann returns to the two earlier [platonic] love affairs"); holds small lectures ("the degree and type of a person's sexuality extend into his spirituality to the highest degree"); meditates on big questions in literary language ("death, however, is not bad for one who sees the starry sky blinking over every grave"); scolds from the perspective of a scandalized *Bürger* ("we do not approve of it.... but the elegant, bourgeois Thomas Mann sneaked off surreptitiously to occult séances"); sighs ("here his limits lie"); and praises ("with a real power of decision and strength of will, he will stand tall"). And Kurzke forgoes most scholarly apparatus. Five hundred and eighty pages and footnote-less (in the English version), his narrative resembles a novelistic tome, or the kind of novel that Mann wrote. So Kurzke evokes Mann's art as he portrays his life. That is not just a nice scenic effect. In Leslie Willson's daringly faithful translation, Kurzke's prose has a Mann-like lyrical rhythm and its own aesthetic appeal ("Fascism is what is impure, what is unvirtuous, the babbling foolishness of Baal, irrationality abiding in dark fertility"). But, more important, through his style of interpretation, Kurzke gets his head around Mann's mind.

How does this process work? Again, Kurzke fits his approach to a very particular set of circumstances. They are as follows: Mann "hid" the homosexuality that dominated his psychic life, Mann's voluminous diaries and letters alert us to its importance; Mann's literature, which "appropriates" more than it "invents," speculates elaborately on his own emotional conflicts. As Kurzke puts it, "The biography of his heart stands spellbound in his writings." Having steeped himself in Mann's diaries, letters and the facts of Mann's personal narrative, Kurzke is able to break the spell and "back-translate." He creates a kind of analytic circuit, using diary entries and correspondences to read Mann's art, and then reads his art to illuminate the hidden part of his life. For while the diaries and letters convey the size and intensity of Mann's eros, they say little about how he experienced the disparities between it and his monogamous heterosexual lifestyle. Nor do they explain the logic of that lifestyle.

Not only is Kurzke's procedure inventive but he applies it with both subtlety and passion. He never makes too much of superficial resemblances or asserts that Thomas Mann must be talking about himself. In fact, as Kurzke uncovers the historical actors behind many of Mann's characters, he stresses that Mann's literary transformations generally have a composite nature. They embody elements of several people, in other words. Mann puts his own works-in-progress on Aschenbach's C.V. That, however, does not mean Aschenbach is a "Mann figure." And although just before he wrote *Death in Venice*, Mann went to the Lido, where he fell for a young tourist, Aschenbach's Tadzio consists exclusively of symbolic features (e.g., beautiful hair and bad teeth) and no doubt has few qualities in common with his "real" model. Still, for Kurzke, the novella is revealing. In his diaries and letters Mann noted his numerous crushes—both homo- and heterosexual—in ingenuous and even kitschy ways ("pretty people are a joy"). *Death in Venice* has the therapeutic function of publicly expressing these tendencies. Yet

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it also levels potent criticisms against them. Aschenbach's surrender to desire is catastrophic—but not because he has transgressed heterosexual norms. The problem with Aschenbach's urges is that they are manifestations of a death drive. They delude Aschenbach, who at times thinks that love is revitalizing him, and that he can recapture and enjoy the simplicity of a youthful attraction. Instead, desire leads him away from the things that mattered most to his creator—work and productivity—and into an "abyss" of formlessness.

According to Kurzke, this aspect of *Death in Venice* too is intimately autobiographical. The ideal of enlightened, long-suffering chastity forms a pervasive motif in Mann's art and, Kurzke surmises, in his life as well. Characters who cannot live up to it end badly. Witness Hans Castorp's seven-year drift, much of which he spends infatuated with Clawdia Chauchat, and his violent demise. Or consider the unfortunate protagonist of *The Black Swan*, a late novella. She is a middle-aged woman in love with a younger man. When she discovers what appears to be menstrual bleeding, she assumes that her amorous feelings have restored her fecundity. But she actually has terminal cervical cancer. Only Joseph, of the "Joseph novels," passes the test and thrives. If we look closely at Mann's diaries, letters and behavior, i.e., his decision to marry, we will see that he lived by the same code. He fought to choose renunciation and work over surrender and the abyss. Kurzke picks up on this equivalence and admonishes us to understand Mann's mental life in the terms of his art. He argues that Mann perceived the world through the lens of his artistic dualisms. Mann feared social stigmatization and kept his homosexuality secret for that reason, shrouding it under a literary "veil." However, his marriage was not a lie, or the result of conventional mechanisms of repression, as other biographers have claimed. Kurzke reads out of the Joseph novels that Mann reflected on and believed in his way of life; that, for Mann, "chastity becomes the fundamental principle of life and perception. It is not merely the masochistic flight of the frustrated." In Kurzke's analyses the differences between Mann and his most famous characters are loaded with biographical significance. Whereas these figures give themselves over to familiar psychological temptations, Mann resists. His work tells us why: Such principled resistance or sublimation makes art on Mann's scale possible (he wrote about 100,000 pages in sixty years). And it made Mann's life into art. This—and not Mann's use of autobiographical material in his literature—is the primary referent of Kurzke's subtitle, "Life as a Work of Art." Kurzke's Mann willfully "erected" a productive life over the emotional and political "abysses" whose pull he knew and described so well.

That point is not entirely new, of course. Michael, Mann's youngest son, once observed that his father lived his own *Bildungsroman*. But Kurzke takes the large additional step of showing how this work developed, and how Mann felt living it. In doing so, and by relating many anecdotes that humanize Mann (for example, Mann seems to have taken wry, vicarious pleasure in the homosexual exploits of his two eldest children, Klaus and Erika), Kurzke alters the image of his embattled subject. Mann's life becomes at once more complex and more understandable—an impressive bit of biographical magic from the Magician's apprentice. ■

THEATER

Unfinished Women

DAVID KAUFMAN

IMAGINARY FRIENDS • THE MERCY SEAT

The public feud between Mary McCarthy and Lillian Hellman continues to warrant our attention long after its two vehement opponents have left the stage. To be sure, the nature of their dispute transcended the specific questions it raised regarding Hellman's misrepresentation of her past. Truth versus mendacity, fact versus fiction, call it what you will—at the heart of their argument was one of the more troubling developments of the twentieth century, which has only intensified as we've moved into the twenty-first: the culture's growing tendency to conflate fact with fiction, both diluting and polluting our reality.

In retrospect, the war between the Jewish leftist Hellman and the Catholic liberal McCarthy seems to have been inevitable. Hellman was a playwright and memoirist who clearly believed in a writer's artistic license to embroider. Though McCarthy based some of her novels on her own life, she was a stickler—and ultimately a crusader—for the truth.

What might be viewed as their lifelong rivalry culminated in 1980, when McCarthy famously said of Hellman during a TV interview with Dick Cavett: "Every word she writes is a lie, including 'and' and 'the.'" In spite of Hellman's bringing a $2.25 million lawsuit against her, McCarthy has been vindicated over the years, as we've come to learn that the plaintiff indeed lied about any number of things in her ostensibly autobiographical trilogy: *An Unfinished Woman*, *Pentimento* and *Scoundrel Time*.

While the hyperbolic thrust of McCarthy's remark would probably have proven indefensible in a court of law, Hellman's charges never made it to trial—not until now, that is, via the playful and bitchy imagination of Nora Ephron. In *Imaginary Friends*, her new "play with music" at the Ethel Barrymore Theatre, Ephron has these grande dames of American letters confront each other in a handsome and stylish red set in hell, where they bicker over everything, from how often they actually met to how the play that contains them should be staged. (When a relatively sedate McCarthy asks if there really has to be music, the more flamboyant Hellman says, "Why not? We have musicians.")

It's both sad and ironic to realize that while Hellman's own plays are produced with less and less frequency, *Imaginary Friends* is at least the third play to feature her as a main character, following William Luce's *Lillian* and Peter Feibleman's *Cakewalk*. (Neil Simon has written a fourth, *Rose and Walsh*, based on Hellman's relationship with Dashiell Hammett; it is to begin previews in Los Angeles at the end of this month.) But then, as Robert Brustein wrote in his tribute to Hellman shortly after her death in 1984, "It may be that her life, with its strong alliances, combative courage, and abrupt domestic scenes, will eventually be considered her greatest theater." And in a witty defense of his subject's tendency to dissemble, biographer Carl Rollyson also emphasized Hellman's sense of theatricality when he claimed, "She suspended her own sense of disbelief."

David Kaufman has covered theater for the Daily News, Downtown *and other publications. His first book,* Ridiculous! The Theatrical Life and Times of Charles Ludlam, *has just been published by Applause Books.*

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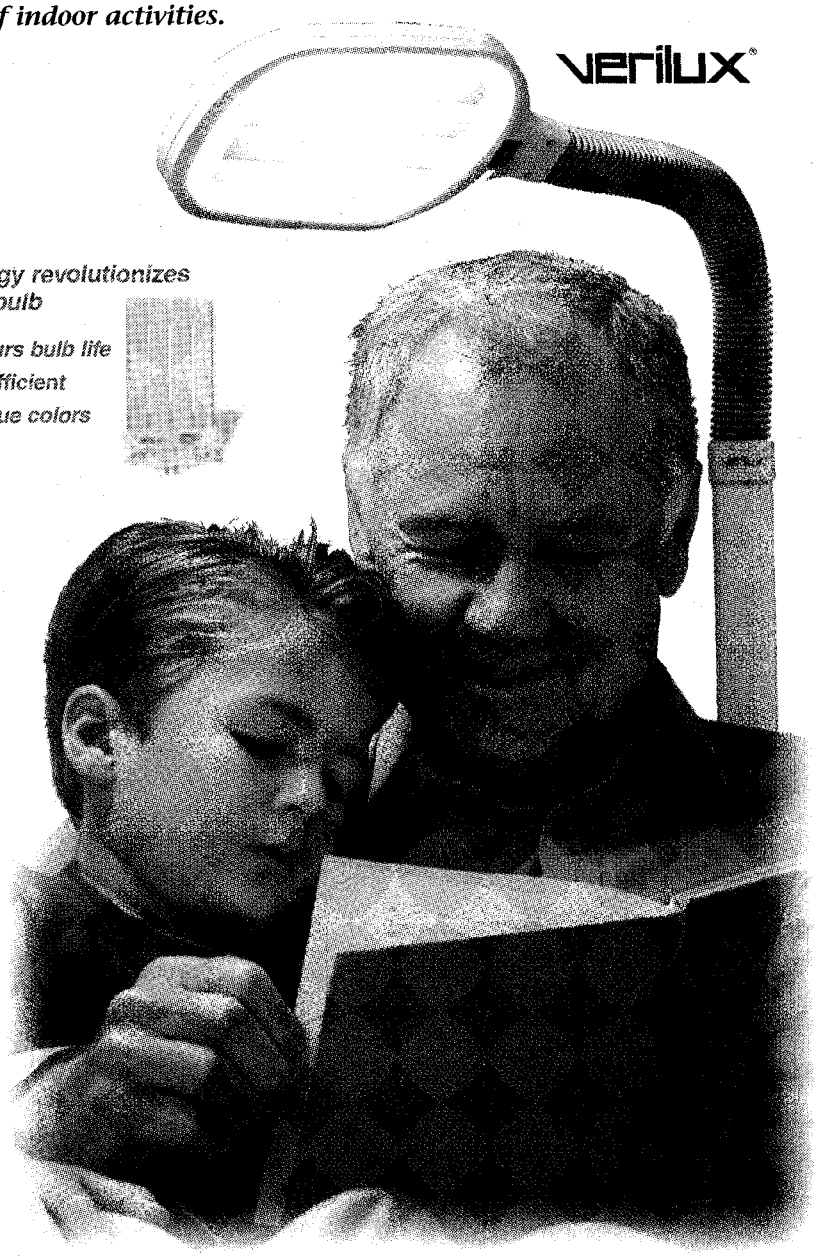

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Ephron herself is no stranger to the blurring of fact and fiction, having based her novel *Heartburn* on her marriage to Carl Bernstein, which she subsequently adapted for a Mike Nichols film of the same name. She is best known as a writer for the screen (in addition to *Heartburn*, she wrote the screenplays for *Silkwood* and *When Harry Met Sally...*) as well as a film director (*Sleepless in Seattle* and *You've Got Mail*). In view of her uneven script for *Imaginary Friends*, it comes as no surprise to read in the program that this is her first play.

Without really having anything new to say about either Hellman or McCarthy, Ephron has found a highly unusual way for saying it, via comic routines, music-hall numbers and old-fashioned vaudeville shtick. Her cartoony approach may seem inappropriately matched to such hardcore intellectuals, and it's bound to offend literary purists. But even if the comic-book tone seems, at first, to trivialize Hellman and McCarthy, it ultimately brings them down to a human scale, where their foibles are writ large, enabling us to see that on one level their war really stemmed from the clash of two outsized personalities vying for public attention.

Besides, given her frequent lunges for the limelight, Hellman in particular began to resemble something of a clown—albeit an outspoken one—in her later years. Consider what is doubtless the most familiar, lingering image of her: donning a fur coat for a ubiquitous Blackglama ad that coyly asked, "What becomes a legend most?" (How, one wonders, did Hellman ever reconcile that ad with her famous remark for the House Un-American Activities Committee: "I cannot and will not cut my conscience to fit this year's fashions"?)

When we first meet "Lillian" in *Imaginary Friends*, she assumes that same imperious Blackglama pose, with an extended hand elegantly displaying a cigarette. The play opens with her asking "Mary" if they ever met, and her being told that they had, "once or twice." It quickly backs up to visit Hellman's childhood in New Orleans, and then McCarthy's in Seattle and Minneapolis, where we view pivotal developments that Ephron suggests prompted the first to become a lifelong liar and the second a consistent seeker of truth.

The narrative proceeds to jump around in time and place as we meet the various men in their respective lives, and observe their initial confrontation at a writers' conference at Sarah Lawrence College in 1948, when McCarthy felt Hellman misrepresented the Spanish Civil War to some students. As it closes the first of two acts, the scene is actually—and quite humorously—played out twice, to accommodate their different memories of what transpired. The play climaxes with Ephron's invented trial, during which Muriel Gardiner takes the stand to say that she was the real one who helped smuggle money to fight the fascists during World War II, as opposed to Hellman, who stole her story for the "Julia" portion of *Pentimento* and made it her own.

The one constant throughout the play is Hellman's and McCarthy's seething anger at each other. ("I ruined your third act," says Mary. "I was your third act," rejoins Lillian.) But in her attempt to appeal to the widest possible Broadway audience, Ephron tends to oversimplify some of the rather complex issues she was compelled to cover. What follows is a typical exchange:

> Mary: I was the palest of pinkos.... I became a Trotskyite almost by chance.
>
> Lillian: No one here even knows what a Trotskyite is anymore.
>
> Mary: No one here knows what a Stalinist is, either. She was a Stalinist. Tell them what you believed.
>
> Lillian: The Stalinists believed that a certain amount of bad stuff was part of any revolution, and that it would eventually stop.
>
> Mary: And the Trotskyites believed that bad stuff was bad stuff and would lead to more bad stuff.

Such didactic catechism would quickly become tiresome if not for the wonderful delivery skills of Swoosie Kurtz and Cherry Jones. The offbeat comedian Kurtz portrays a brazenly haughty Hellman, and the patrician Jones plays a softer and more confident McCarthy. Though neither is giving what might be deemed an exact impersonation, each manages to evoke both the mannerisms and the vocal inflections of their real models with winning results. Though he only has time to present brief caricatures of his real-life counterparts, Harry Groener is equally effective playing everyone from Edmund Wilson and Dashiell Hammett to Philip Rahv and Stephen Spender. The production is also blessed with a first-rate ensemble of eight dancers and singers.

Although Ephron's scenario is overladen with cinematic jump-cuts and transitions, they are smoothly accomplished by Jack O'Brien's smart, staccato direction, which accentuates the theatricality of the enterprise. The evening is also nicely kept in motion by Marvin Hamlisch's tuneful, pastiche score and by Craig Carnelia's lyrics, which veer from being sophisticated and witty to pedestrian. As the tap-dancing, anthropomorphized "Frankie Fact" and "Dick Fiction" sing, with straw hats and canes, no less: "And since you're comfortable with which is which/Some performances we pull a switcheroo/Fact may in fact be Fiction/Out of his jurisdiction/Sometimes in fact there's fiction too."

Fact versus fiction, real life versus artistic representation: Meaningful questions about the blending of art with life were asked by Neil LaBute in his last play, *The Shape of Things*, which focuses on a malicious art student who literally reconstructs—and disfigures—her boyfriend, in the course of turning him into her thesis project. In this somewhat formulaic drama, Evelyn, the student, tells us that arguments and differing opinions are necessary for growth. When she adds that "only indifference is suspect," she could be speaking directly for the playwright who created her.

As with his first two provocative films, *In the Company of Men* and *Your Friends & Neighbors*, LaBute's handful of works for the stage have been geared to shake up his audience by daring to explore politically incorrect positions held by customarily despicable characters. A good deal of LaBute's sensibility can be inferred from his titles alone. An early play was called *Filthy Talk for Troubled Times: Scenes of Intolerance*, and his production company was named Contemptible Entertainment. Underlying all of LaBute's work, however, is a deep-seated morality that stems from his Mormon heritage.

While many began to feel that LaBute was selling out to commercial success in Hollywood by directing *Nurse Betty*, his plays have continued to contend with a more subversive view of life. *Bash: Latter-day Plays* featured three monologues, including one delivered by an unrepentant participant in a fatal gay-beating that's recalled in all of its grisly detail.

But if *Bash* ultimately proved more clinical than dramatic, and if *The Shape of Things* forfeited the credibility of its characters to the rigid formulation of its ideas, LaBute's latest play, *The Mercy Seat*, emerges as his best and most tightly written. Although he is here revisiting the overly familiar subject of marital infidelity, he is also breaking new stylistic ground for himself. By introducing us to two characters in the throes of an intense situation that remains mysterious at first, he captures the mood of early Pinter, when the Playwright of Menace was still at his most effective.

A two-hander, *The Mercy Seat* is finishing up its world premiere Off Broadway at the Manhattan Class Company Theater, in a superlative production directed by the playwright and starring Sigourney Weaver as Abby and Liev Schreiber as Ben. When the

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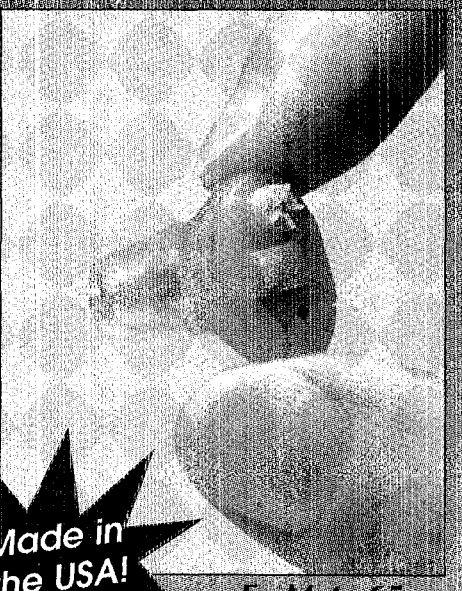

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play opens, Ben is sitting on a sofa in a well-appointed New York loft. He's apparently stricken and in a daze: He fails to answer his cell phone, which keeps ringing.

When Abby arrives, she's annoyed that Ben is not answering his phone, and she becomes even more aggravated to discover that he failed to make an important call he intended to make the day before. Eventually, we realize that Abby is both Ben's boss and his mistress. We also come to learn that this is Abby's loft, that it overlooks the site of the World Trade Center, and that the day is September 12, 2001. Ben was on his way to the WTC for a meeting yesterday morning when he stopped off for a "quickie" with Abby, effectively saving his life.

No sooner were the Twin Towers down than Ben began hatching a scheme to turn the disaster into a "meal ticket" for their happiness: If he's presumed dead, they can run off together, sparing his wife and daughters the grief of knowing that he left them for another woman. Ben's proposal to flee forces Abby to re-evaluate their long-term relationship, and to uncover a good number of her own demons in the process.

For most of the play's uninterrupted 100-minute duration, Ben comes across as just another one of LaBute's selfish and contemptible males, albeit made vividly personal via Schreiber's remarkably nuanced performance. ("This is a national disaster, yes," says Ben, "until the next time the Yankees win the pennant, then we'll all move on from there. Sorry, but it's true.") But given the unexpected phone call he finally makes in the play's surprise ending—which will not be revealed here—both Ben and Abby are lent a complexity that LaBute's characters are typically denied. The play's brilliant conclusion also suggests a Pirandelloesque purgatory for its characters, as it replicates the opening: Abby has left, leaving a bewildered Ben alone on the sofa, not responding to his ringing cell phone.

In a preface to the script, LaBute described his intentions with this play: "I am trying to examine the 'ground zero' of our lives, that gaping hole in ourselves that we try to cover up with clothes from the Gap, with cologne from Ralph Lauren.... I hold the mirror up higher and try to examine how selfishness can still exist during a moment of national selflessness."

In the same introduction, he also claims, "The work itself fairly spilled out of me and onto the page"—and it certainly feels that way, as it rapidly plays out in real time on the stage. It's also perfectly realized by two of our finest actors, each of whom locates a new acting peak with *The Mercy Seat*. It's a special tribute to both Weaver and Schreiber that we come to care deeply about what happens to Abby and Ben, despite their heinous views and actions. How curious it is that these fictional figures should become so painfully real for us, in contrast with the highly stylized portraits of the real Hellman and McCarthy in *Imaginary Friends*. ■

FILMS

The Year in Pictures

STUART KLAWANS

GANGS OF NEW YORK • 25TH HOUR • BEST AND WORST OF 2002

Looking backward in the January chill, I feel my eyes shoot past the films of 2002 toward a movie made some thirty years ago: a picture by Martin Scorsese about violent, driven people in downtown Manhattan and how they were always on top of each other. How intimately Scorsese knew that movie's characters, as if in his childhood he'd cadged snacks from their parents' kitchens! When these people brawled, they banged into furniture that could be traced back to a known source, which was probably a showroom on Bowery. When they talked, they put to work a store of knowledge as precise as the filmmaker's—deciding, for example, how much to pay a cop to go away, or choosing the best means of cheating kids who came around to buy firecrackers.

I miss the Scorsese of *Mean Streets*—miss him even though my last, best hope for 2002 was *Gangs of New York*, his film about violent, driven people who live in downtown Manhattan and are always on top of each other. When that picture finally opened, about a year later than expected, I marveled at much of what I saw. (So will anyone who loves movies.) Yet I also felt, as I have since Scorsese went mythic with *The Last Temptation of Christ*, that his films have ballooned, gaining grandeur on the outside at the expense of the stuffing within. Although *Gangs of New York* is thrilling from the start, I sighed to see where the action begins: inside a timeless, cavernous maze of flaring torches and pounding drums, fiery smithies and totems on a stick.

With all that chthonic hoo-ha, you'd hardly know that the year is 1846, and the place the Five Points in New York City. A battle is about to be joined on the snow-dusted commons, where pigs root beside buildings that are mere overgrown shacks. Here assemble volunteer armies composed of "native" Americans and "foreign-born" Irish, the former led by Butcher (Daniel Day-Lewis), the latter by Priest (Liam Neeson), who carry somewhat cruder armaments than were used at Agincourt—knives and cleavers, mostly, cudgels and swords. Following Priest and his young son toward the bloodletting, the camera hurries through vaulted caves, past an altar where communion is being celebrated and ancient oaths renewed, up through the latticework cages of a vast tenement that is reminiscent of nothing so much as the domed city in Fellini's *Satyricon*.

This, according to Scorsese, is the buried reality on which we have built today's New York. Beneath our feet lie the remnants of a primitive world, ritualistic, bloody and tribal.

I'm sure this much is true: In the violence of people's emotions and the vividness of their sensations, the Five Points of 1846 must have been closer to the Europe of the Middle Ages than it is to us. Scorsese knows this, and so he plunges into a city that seems strangely medieval in everything but its accent. "Ears and noses shall be da trophies uh duh day," Butcher cries out to his troops, after he has killed Priest in single combat, and so decided "who holds sway over duh Five Points." As for Priest's young son, he is to be handed over to the authorities, the only people around who are sufficiently post-Enlightenment as to operate a workhouse. There the child will mature into Amsterdam (Leonardo DiCaprio), a glowering young man who will return someday with the aim of wreaking vengeance.

Now, no cinematic rule book requires Scorsese to have cadged snacks from Amsterdam's parents. (What would Priest have served, anyway? A singed joint?) Characters can be treated iconically or behaviorally, rather than fleshed out with mundane detail, if the filmmaker is mostly interested in the play of historical forces. That was Rossellini's concern, for example, in *The Rise of Louis XIV*, and it's part of what Scorsese has in mind in *Gangs of New York*. If you were to run this film at forty times the

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standard speed, you'd see the medievalists crest like a wave, then crash in blind futility on the rocks of the modern world.

When *Gangs of New York* is run normally, though, you've got an awful lot of time to wish for Amsterdam to grow a personality. "Who are you? Who are you?" demands his love interest (Cameron Diaz) during a tender moment shared in a catacomb; and the audience might well ask the question a third time. (Or a fourth: The skirt role is so thinly conceived in *Gangs of New York*, even for a Scorsese movie, that it could be filled by volunteers from the audience.) It's fine for subsidiary figures to serve as historical markers—witness Jim Broadbent, who is ideally cast as Boss Tweed. But it's not so good when two of the three principals are just holding up their costumes, while Butcher points up the fault by bursting out of his. Scorsese loves this man's heroic misbehavior. He encourages Day-Lewis to express it in a grand-scale, anything-goes performance, which encompasses every acting style from mustache-twirling to a De Niro imitation. Studious in his brutality, vain about his clothes, avid to learn big words and try them out, magnanimous, moralistic, less cunning than he imagines himself to be but exactly as scary, Butcher is the masterpiece that Day-Lewis created while Scorsese was straining to realize his own.

But to return to that sense of timelessness: *Gangs of New York* may break into pieces, some more brilliant or compelling than others, but Scorsese clearly thought up a whole movie. He meant to make something for the ages. Spike Lee, on the other hand, seems to think in skits, which he strings together into a movie. Once in a great while, the skits add up to a whole, as in *Do the Right Thing*. On other occasions, Lee's characters know themselves to be performing skits (like the phone-sex workers in *Girl 6* or the blackface comedians in *Bamboozled*), so there's a harmony to the movie, if not a unity. And then there are Spike Lee's this-and-that movies, into which he tosses whatever he's thinking about.

These are not timeless masterpieces. They're movies of the moment, which risk being neglected tomorrow for the sake of telling you something today. One of the better is Lee's new film, *25th Hour*.

Based on a novel by David Benioff, *25th Hour* tracks the life of a soulful, intelligent, upstanding drug dealer named Monty Brogan (Edward Norton) on the day before he's to report to prison. OK, so the movie's a fantasy. The improbability of its premise matters less than the plausibility of the characters, Monty included, all of whom seem intimately familiar to Lee, none of whom (by the way) are African-American.

Over the course of the day, Monty visits his reformed-boozer father (Brian Cox), completes some business with his former associates in the Russian mob, endures a nightlong party with his two best friends (Philip Seymour Hoffman and Barry Pepper) and asks himself repeatedly whether his girlfriend (Rosario Dawson) was the snitch who betrayed him. There's also a second question hanging over Monty. Come morning, will he really turn himself in? Or will he go into hiding—or put a bullet through his head?

I ought to praise the performances in *25th Hour*, and by now I am obliged at least to mention the infuriated monologue that Edward Norton speaks into a mirror, in a scene that's already become celebrated. I ought to praise the music, the cinematography by Rodrigo Prieto and much else. What interests me the most, though, is the lack of any need to incorporate the September 11 attacks into the movie.

Lee simply took it into his head to film the Towers of Light memorial at the World Trade Center site, to shoot an entire dialogue scene against the background of Ground Zero, to record in passing a tribute to the slain firefighters of Rescue 5. These images contribute nothing to the story, and in the best way possible. They don't raise Monty's situation to the world-historical level; they don't teach him that his problems are really very small; and they sure as hell don't turn into metaphors. These are facts, as arbitrary as they're painful, which Monty lives with just because they're present, and which Lee put into the movie for the same reason.

Too few movies in 2002—in any year, for that matter—have borne the stamp of their time. Maybe filmmakers, or the people who give them money, are afraid that such marks read like an expiration date. Spike Lee knows better. He made *25th Hour* for the moment—and so the best parts of it will stay fresh forever.

And now, for the moment, my list of the best and worst of 2002.

The ten best films released during the year, as I rank them today, were *Russian Ark*, *Talk to Her*, *Y Tu Mamá También*, *Punch-Drunk Love*, *What Time Is It There?*, *I'm Going Home*, *The Pianist*, *Eloge de l'amour*, *Storytelling* and *A Grin Without a Cat*. Honorable mentions—fifteen in all—go to *Domestic Violence*, *Spider-Man*, *Adaptation*, *Time Out*, *Read My Lips*, *Monsoon Wedding*, *Minority Report*, *About Schmidt*, *Gangs of New York*, *Bowling for Columbine*, *25th Hour*, *8 Mile*, *The Bourne Identity*, *How to Draw*

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a Bunny and *Roger Dodger*.

As for the ten worst: I have wrestled with myself over whether to top the list with *Far From Heaven*. I've decided I won't. There are some good things to be found in that picture; and though it frequently irritated me, it never caused me pain.

The ten movies that *did* inflict suffering were *Death to Smoochy*, *Chicago*, *The Hours*, *Rollerball*, *Hart's War*, *Queen of the Damned*, *The Piano Teacher*, *Signs*, *Insomnia* and *Divine Secrets of the Ya-Ya Sisterhood*.

Here's to a better 2003. ■

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NEW YORK

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The advertising deadline for Events is every Thursday. Rates: $175 for 50 words; $225 for 75 words, additional words (above 75) $2.00 each. To place an ad, call Michael at (212) 209-5414.

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AUTHOR'S QUERY

F.O. MATTHIESSEN (1902–50). Biographer of the Harvard literary scholar would appreciate hearing from his former friends, colleagues and students. Please contact Professor Jay Grossman at Jay-Grossman@northwestern.edu, or send c/o American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 136 Irving St., Cambridge, MA 02138.

BOOKLETS

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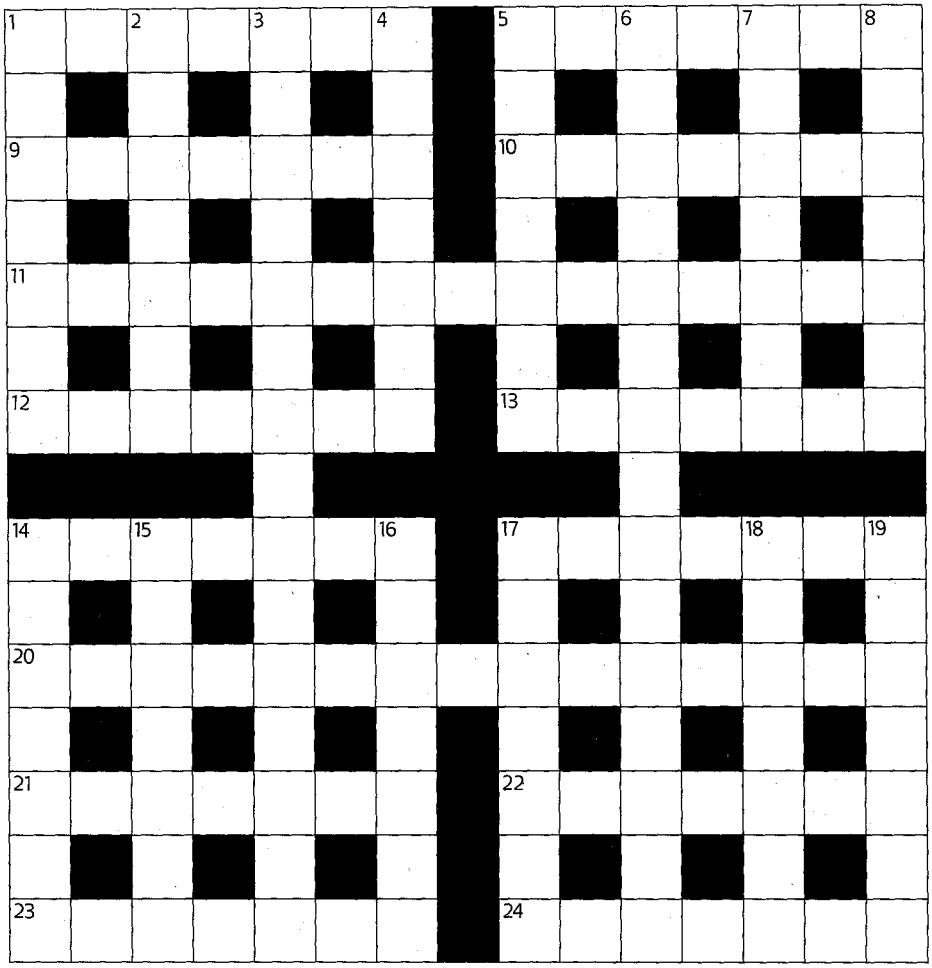
PUZZLE NO. 2877

FRANK W. LEWIS



ACROSS

1 An exploded grenade naturally causes one to feel this way! (7)

5 Another term for one of them might be "baggage." (Changeable to us; she is merely different.) (7)

9 Traditionally a pressing time, considering what might have happened the day before. (7)

10 Wild cattle, when around the head of the herd, would still be tangible property. (7)

11 A chamber of bullets ought to get wild deer, being so indicative of a bad posture. (5-10)

12 Testified under oath in olden times, three consecutive letters come back indeed! (7)

13 A storybook sprinkler that might put you to sleep. (7)

14 and **17** Does it take to pieces the theaters visited in turn by preventing a short interruption? (7,7)

20 A happy solution, offering an awful lot to the gambler. (2,4,3,6)

21 Everything is coming down in the form of frozen rain, causing a joyful exclamation. (3,4)

22 Does, in a way, have a hot heart, which is crazy—but it is easily calmed down. (7)

23 It probably results in a come-down if you do. (7)

24 Such things as the statements of the sage, in talks about a gin concoction. (7)

DOWN

1 What one may have done with the data, with possibly ten wild deer. (7)

2 Concerning the point on a wise crack, you might have to when you're out of gear. (2-5)

3 Lower states were involved in visits about where Leo lives, with almost what little Tom does on pursuit. (7,8)

4 Is the MD sort of shy to act up when your feet are not wet? (3-4)

5 Here in old Rome, what you may be in when tipsy could show you have been drinking. (Stop them with another drink!) (7)

6 One doesn't sit down this way at something like a wedding—as you insist on what sounds right! (5,2,8)

7 Sounds almost like what you might do with the dead man, for the meantime! (7)

8 He opposed making a crusade, with the rising sound of unhappiness at the noise. (7)

14 What the old cow chews around the main part of the dessert! (7)

15 Founder in classic style with a partner. (7)

16 A wrecked car is said to be with the toad let loose. (7)

17 What the old-fashioned lady does to her soul makes the good queen confused about the French. (7)

18 We understand this way it's about a craving in the cookery! (7)

19 The screen presentation shows D, D and a couple of C's—with no sharps or flats! (7)

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 2876

■	C	H	A	N	G	E	■	O	F	H	E	A	R	T
S	■	O	■	A	■	N	■	W	■	I	■	S	■	H
T	U	R	K	I	S	T	A	N	■	A	L	T	A	I
U	■	S	■	V	■	I	■	U	■	L	■	H	■	S
P	R	E	S	E	N	T	■	P	R	E	F	E	C	T
O	■	■	■	L	■	L	■	■	■	A	■	C	■	L
R	E	L	A	Y	■	I	R	O	N	H	O	R	S	E
■	■	A	■	■	■	N	■	V	■	■	■	O	■	■
C	A	T	A	L	O	G	U	E	■	T	O	W	I	T
A	■	I	■	O	■	■	■	R	■	E	■	■	■	A
P	U	T	S	O	F	F	■	D	I	S	T	U	R	B
E	■	U	■	K	■	L	■	O	■	T	■	S	■	L
R	A	D	I	I	■	I	N	S	T	I	T	U	T	E
E	■	E	■	N	■	E	■	E	■	N	■	A	■	S
D	E	S	I	G	N	S	■	S	A	G	E	L	Y	■

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